PIERRE LASSERRE

THE EVOLUTION OF HIS CRITICAL DOCTRINES

WILBUR MERRILL FROHOCK

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PIERRE LASSERRE

THE EVOLUTION OF HIS CRITICAL DOCTRINES

By

WILBUR MERRILL FROHOCK

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
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To

ETHELYN MERRILL FROHOCK

HORATIO WILBUR FROHOCK

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ERRATA[1]

Page	Line	For	Read
1	26	représant	représentant
2	note 3	critiques	critique d'
3	15	license	licence
4	16	á	à
	24	haineuse ,	haineuse
9	24	aristorcracy	aristocracy
10	37	moral	morale
11	13	attainment	attainment,
	23	nait	naît
12	note 16	germainique	germanique
16	19	an	en
17	25	detesta- siecle	détesta- siècle
21	note 14	moralliste	moraliste
	note 16	d!	d'
22	3	a	à
25	28	revolu-	révolu-
26	7	works	work
37	16	simplisitc	simplistic
39	1	superiorité	supériorité
43	5	se	si
	24	évènements	événements
45	28	apercus	aperçus
	31	problemes	problèmes
	32	problémes	"
	33	tout	toutes
	39	c'étatit	c'était
46	5	dégout	dégoût
	6	dangereaux	dangereux
48	3	vecu	vécu
	12	nait	naît
	15	polemique	polémique
56	21	surement	sûrement
	23	morale	moral
57	6	gène	gêne
	27	la	là
58	25	scholastique	scolastique
	30	tel	telle
	31	la	là
	34	concrête	concrete

Page	Line	For	Read
59	19	object	objet
62	24	séduite	séduits
	28	le	la
63	3	Ce	le
65	21	a....du	à....de
	24	epanoui	épanoui
70	1	ajoutee	ajoutée
72	3	James	Jammes
79	30	crée	créé
81	4	faire d'hos-	faire prévaloir....les attitudes de contradiction et d'ho-
82	7	réalite	réalité
	23	as	and
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	29	1879	1789
93	7	eclatant	éclatant
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95	note 69	si	se
		de	à
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97	37	donne	donné
100	24	theoricien	théoricien
105	10	subject's	subjects
i	Item 5	revolution	révolution
	10	repeats Item 8	
iii	Item 5	RE	Revue encyclopédique
	11	Hierárchie	Hiérarchie
iv	35	1907	1909
v	2	1902	1909
	12	d'Adam	Adam
vi	15	Théatre	Théâtre
	17	Délúgué	Délégué
	17	Rene	René
	18	poéte	poète

Page	Line	For	Read
viii	3	inspiree	inspirée
	25	Andre	André
x	15	G.G.C.	C.G.Q.
xi	13	Breve	Brève
xii	8	Idem	Nouvelles littéraires
xiii	4	litterature	littérature
		1917	1907
xiv	5	littéraire	littéraires

1. No account is taken here of errors in syllable division of the French. Certain errors listed here could have been avoided had the author been more familiar with the process of reproduction here employed.

PIERRE LASSERRE

THE EVOLUTION OF HIS CRITICAL DOCTRINES

FOREWORD

This is the revised form of a study on the development of the critical thought of Pierre Lasserre submitted as a doctoral dissertation to the Graduate School of Brown University in June 1935. Of the original version, only the fourth and fifth chapters are here reprinted in full. The second and third have been considerably abridged, since the material they contain is being reserved for a history of French criticism from 1870-1914 now in preparation. The first chapter is even more abridged for reasons requiring extended explanation.

Lasserre's long journey from youthful liberalism through the intransigent conservativism of his middle years on to the liberalism in which his career ended is not an isolated experience. The years between the wars of 1870 and 1914 were filled with brusque and often painful conversions to new social, political or religious doctrines: Huysmans, Bourget, Péguy, Brunetière, Barrès and Massis are but a few of those whose testimony commands recognition.

Professor Hazard, in his Crise de la conscience européene[1] has deftly and convincingly discussed the notion that the European mind is prone to fall into periods of anxious self-scrutiny and, that, after each period of certainty in its beliefs and principles ensues an interval of questioning from which it emerges with the beliefs and principles revised or discarded for new ones. Now, if this notion is valid at all, the years in which most of Lasserre's work was done saw in France just such a crisis. Undermined by the defeat of 1870, confidence in the positivistic ideal gradually weakened and died. Taine and Renan had no successors who approached their stature. Younger men, brought up in the

[1]Paris, Boivin, 1935.

waning days of faith in Science spelled with a capital, found themselves forced to search for a new intellectual foothold. Such was the experience of Lasserre and such appears to have been that of most of his generation. A study of this search must inevitably preface a history of the critics affected, even should it be longer than the history itself. The material omitted from the present first chapter will be used in these necessary prolegomena.

Primarily, we are here concerned with how, and when, the changes in Lasserre's critical beliefs took place. Such of his correspondence as is available at this time permits answering the question Why? only occasionally. The bibliography included here is the first even to aspire to the complete enumeration of his works.

My thanks are due to the staffs of the libraries of Brown, Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Wesleyan Universities, of the Bibliothèque Nationale, and of the several Parisian newspapers and reviews whose files were placed at my disposal. The aid of MM. Maurice Martin du Gard, Léon Bérard, Firmin Roz, and the late Jacques Bainville was indispensable. Professor Fernand Baldensperger, Professor George E. Brinton, M. Henri Massis and Mlle Anne-Marie Gasztowtt were exceptionally kind in loaning a number of important documents. My colleague, Mr. D.W. Alden, has been of invaluable assistance in supplementing the original bibliography. To Professors Horatio Smith and Louis Landré I am especially indebted for their advice and patient direction. The colleagues and friends who aided in the ungrateful task of preparing the manuscript for publication are here left unnamed so that they will share no responsibility for the errors which may remain.

W.M.F.

Providence, R.I.
January 12, 1936.

Chapter One

THE ORIGINS, YOUTH, AND EDUCATION OF THE CRITIC

Considering the circumstances in which he was born, precocious manifestations of literary talent in Pierre Lasserre would have been astounding indeed. Sprawled on the north slope of the Pyrenees, his native Béarn is beautiful--but cursed with wet weather and poor soil. Orthez, the commercial capital, exports only smoked meats and other agrarian produce, and is noted on the map only as a lieu remarquable.[1] Life, for the gaily ironical but essentially conservative peasant population, is deliberate. At the time of the critic's birth nothing since the religious upheavals of Henri IV had seriously upset the tenor of local existence.

Lasserre was always so extremely conscious of his birthright that it is by no means unjustifiable to relate to his love of the home province his regionalism, his resentment of governmental centralisation and his passionate patriotism itself. "Pour ne pas l'aimer, il faudrait que je n'eusse pas aimé mon père et ma mère."[2] His speech retained the native accent; his novels are set in the home province; allusions to it recur constantly in his other works. Yet the province lagged as far behind the capital in ideas as in its way of life.

Lasserre was born at Orthez on May 30, 1867, of old Béarnais stock. His mother's race, the d'Arnaudat, belonged to the local aristocracy; a great-great grandfather had been représant de tiers at the States General of 1787, and another ancestor a General of the Republic. His father's line, even closer to the soil, had been landholders at Maslacq, his father being the first to quit the land, educate himself, and enter the bourgeoisie. To his lawyer father young Pierre could be grateful for a thorough and competent education. Among the

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[1]Brossard, La France du Sud-Ouest, passim.
[2]F.Mistral, ..., p. 147

most moving of the son's writings is his tribute to this man who "...n'avait d'estime que pour les biens de l'esprit."[3]

The education itself was conservative and Catholic, no more stimulating to literary talent than the other influences at work on the boy. From the Collège Moncade at Orthez he emigrated first to the school of Saint-Louis de Gonzague, at Bayonne, for his rhétorique and thence to the seminary at Laressor for his philosophie. The Bishops had not yet adopted a policy of manning their schools with priests whose academic equalled their ecclesiastical virtues. Better schooled in Latin than in anything else, more interested in souls than in minds, the teachers held modern literature in such horror that young, curious, and obstinate Lasserre tended to like it before he had the least idea what it was about.[4] Yet, since the books were more accessible, philosophy--the delight in manipulating general ideas--remained first in his affections until Bourget's Cruelle énigme won him over permanently to literature.[5] At sixteen his discovery of Sainte-Beuve's Causeries was light after deep darkness,[6] darkness in which his schooling had kept him but which he did not later resent, feeling that he had gained from the priests a respect for sober thought, just distinctions, and good sense extremely valuable to his mature work.

After his philosophie and a year at the University of Toulouse, he persuaded his family that he was unfit for the law and ripe for study in Paris. There, after work at the Collège Stanislas under René Dou mic and Paul Desjardins, he failed in the entrance competition of the Ecole Normale Supérieure.

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[3]En Béarn, RDM, May 15, 1929. The following abbreviations of periodicals are employed: AF = Action française (daily), NL = Nouvelles littéraires, RB = Revue bleue, RDM = Revue des Deux Mondes, RH = Revue hebdomadaire, R Phil = Revue philosophique, RAF = Revue d'Action Française, RCHL = Revue critiques, histoire et de littérature.

[4]Préface to M-L. Pailleron's Sainte-Beuve à seize ans, p.8.

[5]La Statue volée, p.46.

[6]Préface to M-L. Pailleron, Op. Cit., p. 10.

For this failure there was ample reason. Lasserre had been reading everything, and hearing all the music he could find. He had felt the influence of all the contemporary great--Loti, Brunetière, Faguet, Vogué and Bourget.[7] He had read Renan, an exciting experience after the careful censorship of the provinces.[8] Taine had delighted him, although he was bothered by what he thought were errors in Taine's thinking.[9] In view of such varied intellectual activity, his failure was not surprising. His philosophy paper was highest in the ranking, but his French composition was last; he was only admissible. He could have presented himself a second time, but he refused, preferring to enter the Lycée Henri IV as an étudiant libre, do his military service, and then work at the Sorbonne. He passed his license in 1891. A year later he was to pass the agrégation de philosophie and be assigned a suppléance at the Lycée Carnot.[10]

II

Meanwhile, in 1891, Lasserre published his first book, La Crise chrétienne, which attracted so little attention that it is not even listed in Ginisty's Année littéraire. This was the year of Barrès' Jardin de Bérénice, which, with Barrès' evolution not yet clear, was then a very puzzling book. It was also the year of Huysmans' wierd Là-Bas. Bourget's Disciple, with the problem it involved, was of contemporary interest. Tolstoi's Pamphile et Julius and Ibsen's Rosmersholm were being offered to the public in translation. Edouard Rod had published his anxious Idées morales du temps présent. Brunetière was calling for a more impersonal criticism and Anatole France was delighting his readers with the impressionistic Vie littéraire. Public interest in oriental philosophy was catered to in Chevrillon's Dans l'Inde, in France's reviewing,[11] in a translation of the

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[7] M. Victor Giraud, "Les Maîtres de l'heure," AF, April 16, 1911.
[8] Trente ans de vie littéraire, p.211.
[9] Faust en France, p.84.
[10] M. Martin du Gard, Vérités du moment, p.94,ff.
[11] Vie littéraire, ser. 3; Bouddhisme.

Kama-Soutra. Small wonder that, in this intellectual welter, Lasserre's book went unnoticed. So also did the Cahiers of one André Walter, whose real identity the alert Ginisty apparently did not know! It was a moment when directions were not clearly marked, when the esoteric commanded unusual respect, when, indeed, a small volume of philosophic dialogues, genre Ernest Renan, would cause little stir.

The book was the coup d'essai of a young man willing to grapple with heavy problems and interested in many things, but still in an experimental mood regarding life. To him the problem is less one of restoring to Christianity its original vigor than of tracing the theories and conditions which have made the faith untenable to many minds. He feels the influence of Renan, "... notre inspirateur á tous..."[12] The characters in the dialogues are complete relativists.[13] He, too, has lost his faith, but he shows few signs of discomfort in adapting himself to this new atmosphere in which he is now moving. There constantly appear, on the other hand, such autobiographical remarks as the following.

> Elevé par des prêtres bons, mais aveugles, ce culte me vengeait de leur injustice souvent haineuse, pour l'esprit moderne. Dans ce petit séminaire dont il me reste un étrange souvenir, je gardais ma foi et mon dévoûment à mon époque, comme un trésor menacé de profanation.[14]

He regrets that his predecessors have been so purely destructive, for "...il n'est de philosophie forte et profonde que celle qui sauvegarde le devoir et sanctionne l'effort,"[15] yet he is mistrustful of action for action's sake; for his contemporaries who make a fetich of pure spontaneity he has no sympathy.[16] In other words, his predecessors have ruined the old answers to the eternal problems and his coevals have found no new ones.

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[12] La Crise chrétienne, p. 238.
[13] Idem, p.33.
[14] Idem, p.93.
[15] Idem, p.ii.
[16] Idem, p.iv.--The reference is probably aimed at Desjardins' Union pour l'Action morale.

On nineteenth-century literature his judgments are almost noncommittal. He calls Romanticism a weakness,[17] but finds the Romantics themselves sympathiques.[18] Art for art, he feels, perished of its own poverty.[19] The whole scientific movement of the mid-century, lacking a saving touch of humanity, bore its own death within it.[20] He indicates the incendiary influence of Rousseau over the men of '89, but condemns neither him nor them.[21] Democracy enters his picture only for its encouragement of individualism in literature.[22] The Revolution itself is one of those historical facts on which it is futile to pass judgment.

What is most apparent here is that Lasserre is making no hasty decisions. He is assessing and evaluating, at times interpreting, but as a surveyor rather than as a magistrate. In this he is a good liberal. And yet, he has a feeling that Romanticism is unhealthy, that the scientific mid-century was sterile, and is showing a tendency to relate Romanticism, Democracy and Revolution to the citizen of Geneva. The simple assertion of a causal relationship between these elements would turn his book into an attack on the nineteenth century. If we are right in considering him a liberal at this point, we must add that his liberalism is that of the young man who has not yet trouvé sa voie. It would require little to turn such liberalism into something else.

In the years just following, Lasserre wrote little. However, two book reviews which he did find time to write show him continuing his excursion into ideas.

G. de Séailles' Léonard de Vinci, l'artiste et le savant, gave the young critic an opportunity to formulate his notion of Classicism. Underlying all Leonardo's activities Lasserre perceives the same striving for an ideal; consequently, each of the artist's attempts to paint a beautiful woman, or dissect a cadaver, or build a flying machine was an attempt to define the ultimate

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[17] Idem, pp.24 and 153.
[18] Idem, pp.9 and 11.
[19] Idem, pp.128-132.
[20] Idem, p.160-161.
[21] Idem, p.58.
[22] Idem, p.78.

law behind the accident."...Or les choses ne sont comprises, que dis-je? elles ne sont vraiment vues qu'autant qu'au travers de leurs formes et de leurs nuances apparaissent leurs lois....les choses sont particulières et elles universelles..." Classicism, to Lasserre, is simply this striving after the universal. Although he sees its best manifestations in Greece, Renaissance Italy and seventeenth-century France, nothing need prevent its recrudescence in 1893. Similarly, he will later see Romanticism, the opposite mental attitude, as real and possible in 1907 as in 1830.[23]

Another book by Séailles, Ernest Renan, essai de biographie psychologique, gave Lasserre the chance to discuss the "véritable drame d'idées" of the nineteenth century. To him Renan is the crossroads where all ideas meet, a notion which will accompany Lasserre through life, as will the interest which he already shows in the reasons for Renan's defection from the Church. In tone, the article strives for detachment. Lasserre regrets Renan's latter day "caprices et régressions," but the judgment is mild, an evidence that Lasserre was, as he later said, trying at this time to live for "la pensée pure." He is disinterestedly, intensely intellectual--although it is not clear that his disinterestedness was consciously sought after. Possibly it was the result of an inability to choose between the numerous attitudes (We have seen their number by viewing the literary output of one sample year) regarding life and art.

III

He needed perspective. In 1893 he had gone to teach for a year in St.-Brieuc, Brittany, where he had observed Breton life and enjoyed himself, but he wished to remove himself still further--to Germany. He applied to the government for a traveling fellowship, which was finally granted, after hesitation, on the strength of his article on Renan.[25]

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[23] Léonard de Vinci, l'artiste et le savant, RB, 1893, 52, p.11.

[24] Un Livre sur Renan, R. Phil., Dec., 1895.

[25] Mes Routes, p.iv,ff. That the Renan article influenced the decision is Lasserre's own statement, but one which has never been challenged.

He went there expecting much, because Germany was to him the Mecca of philosophers,[26] and because he loved German music.[27] Young, impractical, something of a dreamer, he tramped the German hills,[28] attended every possible concert, studied little.[29] In the German professors he was equally disappointed at Munich, Heidelberg and Berlin.[30] From his whole stay, his greatest tangible acquisition was the mastery of the language.[31]

What he saw during his stay in Germany, however, was to help in forming what he had long lacked, a definite point of view. Pan-Germanism was rampant; the militarization of Germany impressed him deeply; he returned to France convinced that German arms and German ideas were a menace to France.[32] He came home, late in 1897, aware of his nationality and a self-conscious patriot. The condition of the country to which he returned determined him to make his patriotism the standard of measurement for all his ideas.

IV

Events in France had made the German menace grave indeed. Brought face to face at last by the Dreyfus Case, Liberals and Conservatives, Jews and Gentiles, Free-Masons and Catholics, Pacifists and Militarists, were at each others' throats. Their resentments, some of them older than the Third Republic, flamed high. Lasserre's arrival preceded only by a few weeks the publication of J'Accuse.[33] Dissention within seemed to him to have put the country in straits where it could not face dangers from without. He was shocked out of his "vie de demirêve."[34] He did not believe the condemned man guilty, but felt that it was better for one to suffer than for the whole country to disintegrate.[35] Accordingly, he joined forces with the group which stood out the most ardently for a strong France, l'Action Française.

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[26] Idem, p.iii.
[27] Des Romantiques à nous, préface, passim.
[28] Mes Routes, p.xi. [29] Idem, p.ix. [30] Idem, p.vii.
[31] Idem, p.vi. [32] Idem, p.xiv.
[33] Figaro, January 13, 1898.
[34] Mes Routes, p.xxvii.
[35] Mise au point, chapter, l'Affaire Dreyfus.

His name does not appear on the earliest documents of the association, and, apparently, he did not take part actively during the first months of its life, but he was then working on a book which was to be a reagent against the intellectual anarchy of his contemporaries, and this book began to appear serially in the Revue d'Action française of November 15, 1899, marking the start of a period of close collaboration with the group and its leader, Charles Maurras, which was to continue for the next fifteen years.

He had ceased to be one of the "...rêveurs.... qui dédaignent un peu paresseusement d'avoir égard à la vie pratique, mais qui n'en possédaient pas moins pour cela un fonds de solidité morale et de bon sens qu'il suffirait de provoquer pour qu'il éclatât..." [36]

A new period in his career had begun.

[36] Idem, p.30.

Chapter Two

CRUSADE AGAINST ROMANTICISM

In the Crise chrétienne Lasserre had stated the problems confronting his contemporaries. Now, in the Morale de Nietzsche he comes forward with the solutions. At first entitled Nietzsche contre l'anarchisme[1], this book proposed to "initier ou plutôt "amorcer" aux idées de Nietzsche quelques jeunes esprits particulièrement capables d'en tirer profit comme il venait de nous arriver à nous-même, et d'en recevoir non un joug mais une stimulation dans leur développement."[2] Although the manuscript, finished in March, 1897, antedated the formation of the Action Française by more than a year, the new basis for affirmation and faith which Lasserre found in Nietzsche was already a justification of the program of the Action Française. His fervor was so great that, as he later admitted[3], he rearranged Nietzsche to his purpose. Clearly, this was a new Lasserre.

I

One very salient fact emerges from examining the book: Lasserre has become aware of social and political morality, and of the desirability of maintaining the social and political status quo. From the concerns of the individual he has progressed to those of the group.

He now argues that the moral man is the disciplined man and that moral society has to learn self-discipline by force from an aristorcracy of self-disciplined individual.[4] ≪Tout droit est un legs de la force.≫[5]

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[1]RAF, Nov. 15, Dec. 1 and Dec. 15, 1899. Since the variants reveal only Lasserre's concerns with style, references following are to the 1902 edition.

[2]La Morale de Nietzsche, p. 41.

[3]Idem, p.123.

[4]Idem, pp.52-55.

[5]Idem, p.50.

Such is the basic thesis of which the ramifications include far more than politics and social thought.

This is his reply to the Socialists. Lasserre admits the reality of the social struggle, but sees the welfare of the group not in the ultimate classless society but in the strength of a governing class. No other is a fit custodian for the vital force of the nation. He agrees with Nietzsche that there is one morality for the slave and another for the master, and that the dominance of the former would spell catastrophe. Thus he also fears Democracy, which will usurp the rights of the élite by putting to question the abstract principles of morals and taste of which the justification is necessarily pragmatic. This would mean the installation of the ideology of anarchy, the "...prétention de mettre à tout prix de la raison, de l'absolu dans la morale."[6] The notion that such a thing can be done is a Romantic delusion.[7]

Democracy and Socialism, Lasserre believes, defeat the state's performance of its first duty, which is to be strong. Politically, this is an argument for preserving a social hierarchy. In other fields he revises ideas which he had previously expressed, judging where previously he had suspended judgment. He is in revolt against the common teachings of his century. Primitive virtue and the natural man, dear to Rousseau and the Romantics, are denied in his notion of morality, since moral civilization depends on progress from the primitive state. (Lasserre has not forgotten the pride of the Pan-Germans in their being the Ur-Volk.) For primitive virtue and the natural man he substitutes force and discipline of character.

Consequently, Lasserre now finds in Romanticism the source of deep political and moral disorder. Romantic art is the expression of the democratic or slave mind[8] and Rousseau is the fountain-head of Romanticism," ...celui des génies modernes en qui la moral des esclaves a atteint son plus haut degré d'ébullition..."[9] The

[6] Idem, p.103.
[7] Idem, p.76.
[8] Idem, p.108.
[9] Idem, p.112.

Classic--in Lasserre's mind the only true art--is, like civilization, the product of strong moeurs, of accepted rules which sanction tried and vigorous forms of artistic production; these the artist must adapt to the needs of his genius. They place at his disposal the experience of generations. A Goethe, he says, deprived of these guides, was forced to discover them for himself--a waste of time and energy for which the nineteenth century is directly to blame.[10]

Romanticism is the negation of recognized forms; the essence of Classicism is the rediscovery of the grace, majesty and mystery we have felt before in different ways. (The attainment touching of the Universal as mentioned in the article on Leonardo.) Classicism is strong but not violent, sees clearly even in intoxication, grips and terrifies but without physical oppression, is dignified, serene, clear, suave. Romanticism is the opposite--aphrodisiac, hideous, and mastodontic. It appeals to the eyes, ears, nerves, and finally the epidermis. It is bad.[11]

Indicative of his new attitude is Lasserre's hazarding such formulae as the following. "Le Romantisme nait de l'enthousiasme provoqué par les idéaux vides mais grandioses de la philosophie servile chez des hommes dont c'est l'ardent et secret besoin d'échapper, à tout prix, au sentiment de la décadence qui, par eux, s'accomplit."[12] Such daring generalizations will flow uninterrupted from now until the World War. They enter his style when politics begins to dominate his thought. Indeed, with the Morale de Nietzsche Lasserre becomes one of those Frenchmen whose literary tastes, as T. E. Hulme said,[13] could be predicted by anyone knowing their politics.

II

The Morale de Nietzsche well suited the Anti-Dreyfusard group which was seeking a program of action

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[10] Idem, p.114.
[11] Idem, p.119.
[12] Idem, p.112.
[13] Speculations, p.114.

on which all its sympathizers could unite, the Action Française. Joined only in dissatisfaction, founded by the Republican Henri Vaugeois, not yet Royalist, its only common doctrine was Nationalism.[14] Shortly, it was to become Royalist, Pro-Catholic, Anti-Semite and Anti-Protestant. This was the work of Charles Maurras.

Maurras was a minor poet, a clever literary critic, a fiery journalist, but above all a powerful personality. He soon dominated the new organization. A southerner, he had followed Moréas in the attempt of the Ecole romane to reorient French poetry in its traditional Latin and Greek forms. He was a reactionary by nature and he moulded the Action Française on reactionary lines. Being Royalist in politics, Classicist in literature, and non-practising Catholic in religion (because he felt the Church a natural ally of his authoritarianism), Maurras deplored the Reformation and Protestantism. With violent patriotism he combined Jew-hating. Democracy and governmental centralization he despised.[15] It was he who started the Action Française on its turbulent career.

Eventually the members were to stage street meetings and riots, spread propaganda, interrupt professors in the Sorbonne, serve jail sentences for their doings and fight political duels with pen and sword. If Lasserre was weary of a life of pure thought, here was something quite different!

Our analysis has shown the natural sympathy of his new views for those of Maurras. From the time of their publication in the Morale de Nietzsche, the pages of Action Française periodicals were open to him.

III

Possibly Lasserre's marriage in 1899 and his new professorship at the lycée at Chartres explain why, during the next few years, his whole output was a scant dozen articles in the Revue d'Action Française and the Mercure de France. He was, however, planning two books, La Culture française, which was never published[16], and an

[14]For the statement of the original credo, see RAF, Nov. 15, 1899.
[15]cf. A. Thibaudet, Trente années de vie française, I, passim.
[16]See footnote to article, l'Esprit germainique, MF, July, 1901.

Histoire de la sensibilité romantique, on which he began his research in 1901; in the spring of 1903 he began the actual writing and on July 26, 1906, he finished the book, whose title had been changed in the interval to Le Romantisme français.[17] Meanwhile, what magazine articles he did find time to write made clearer his allegiance to Maurras.

Sur la hiérarchie,[18] written for but never incorporated in the Morale de Nietzsche, and Charles Maurras et la renaissance classique[19] leave small doubt on this point. Like Maurras, Lasserre goes to monarchical Greece for his substitute for anarchy. He claims to advocate no Utopia, the Hellenic ideal having contained a strong admixture of political realism which recognized the natural inequality of individuals and the necessity of a social hierarchy with workers at the base, warriors in the middle, and statesman-philosophers at the top. This, of course, is the vital point of difference between the ideas of Maurras and those which, more or less completely, France had inherited from the Revolution. The highest pursuits of the intellect are inaccessible to the masses which, says Lasserre, should be guided rather by tradition.[20] Maurras had endorsed, in his Antinéa,[21] the thesis of Fustel de Coulanges,[22] that the decadence of Greece came from the breakdown of old traditions. Lasserre hails Antinéa in Charles Maurras et la renaissance classique. Following Maurras he proclaims that just as any structure, political or otherwise, is a triumph of organization over disorder, a cultured individual or a cultured society is the result of a nice balance of interior forces--which our time has failed to achieve. Democracy destroys the very principle of hierarchy. Maurras, says Lasserre, has the secret for keeping the cosmos within our grasp through discipline of the individual.[23]

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[17] A.-M. Gasztowtt, Pierre Lasserre, passim.

[18] RAF, Mar. 15, 1901.

[19] MF, April 1, 1902.

[20] Charles Maurras et la renaissance classique, passim.

[21] Published in 1901.

[22] Cf. La Cité antique, passim.

[23] As a synonym for this discipline, Lasserre refers to restoring "l'énergie des caractères."

Lasserre now appears also fully as Anti-German as Maurras. His article, L'Esprit germanique, is an analysis of several German ideas which he thinks dangerous for France to honor. The title itself, which posits the notion that national "spirits" really exist, as well as his Barrèsian reference in the second paragraph to "quelques vérités françaises essentielles," shows that the critic is thinking as a Nationalist. Hegel, he feels, with the Becoming-philosophy and Kant with his metaphysics are likely to corrupt the French, whom Lasserre is willing to refer to as the "Athéniens de l'Europe."[24] Hegel's conclusion that all civilizations are but phases in a unique evolution in whose totality God expresses himself has led German historians, despite the merit of their work, to overlook the validity of historical evaluations and the cultural superiority of one epoch or century over another. In France it would minimize the value of the tradition of culture which is an integral part of the esprit français, and thus effect what Lasserre calls the "démocratisation de l'histoire."[25] His objection to Kant is broader: the latter's God, residing beyond reason in the realms of the Inconscient, authorizes bad aesthetic doctrines. From extolling the Inconscient comes a belief in the inscrutability of creative genius, reverence for the spontaneous and ineffable welling-forth. For Lasserre, art is the achievement of a cunning harmony between form and content, and the difference between advanced and primitive art is a question of perfection of form. The opposite belief, that of Kant, flatters Democracy no less than the historical notions of Hegel, for, like art, the esprit germanique associates creative intelligence with the Inconscient. Thus, what Lasserre calls the German Spirit is a combination of historicism and aesthetics which minimizes the value of culture and denies that high human productivity results from ages of labor, trial and error. He is thinking as a Nationalist, as Maurras does; when he combats the esprit germanique he thinks that he is repelling an invasion.

[24] L'Esprit germanique, passim.
[25] Mes Routes, p.177.

It should be noted, however, that his condemnation of Germans is not wholesale. A constant reader of Goethe, he publishes an Introduction au Faust de Goethe in 1898 and a Pages choisies de Goethe in 1901.[26] Goethe he places with Nietzsche and Schopenhauer as exceptions who transcended the national point of view of their compatriots. Unique among his works of this time, the Introduction grinds no axe, betrays no doctrinary motives, is intent only on clearing the way for the pleasure of the reader. The case, however, is isolated.

Meanwhile we see Lasserre assume an Action Française attitude toward two important contemporaries. As a prose master--good prose in France is a tradition--Anatole France commanded his respect. Yet M. Bergeret, as an autobiographical character, is a Dreyfusard, a sort of moral nihilist. Liberty is a function of force and the intelligent M. Bergeret is devoid of force. He is not free and does not deserve to be so intelligent. What to say about such a man? Lasserre solves the problem by denying that Bergeret is a portrait of the master. M. France can create anything, even an intelligent Dreyfusard. Thus, while defending his own political principles, Lasserre sidesteps condemning the custodian of a great French tradition.[27] In the case of Paul Bourget there is no questioning Lasserre's admiration, yet once again he skates on thin ice. Bourget has just returned to the Church, and Lasserre, like Maurras, is an unbeliever. Thus, he chooses to admire the conversion because it followed a long excursion into cold-blooded moral analysis, and for its common sense, rather than mystical, approach to the Church. What is important, he thinks, is that through the Church Bourget has escaped the nineteenth century and found a fixed, regulated way of life. He does not wish to hurt the feelings of Catholics in the Action Française. Yet his attitude is not unequivocal, and later in life he will admit that it displeases him.[28] Is it unfair to suggest here that he was temporizing between his own desires and the welfare of his party?[29]

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[26] MF, Sept., 1898.

[27] RAF, Feb. 1, 1900. Reprinted in La Statue volée.

[28] La Statue volée, p.16. Written in 1927.

[29] RAF, Nov. 1, 1900. Reprinted in La Statue volée.--Cf. Maurras' own rather humorless statement that he had carefully avoided seeing the Master for twelve years so that no breach would open between them.--A. France, politique et poète, p.48.

IV

With the last of these articles Lasserre suspended his collaboration with the Action Française periodicals to work on Le Romantisme français, in which his new ideas were being organized into a set of standards for measuring the literature of the nineteenth century.[29]

This book has been called everything from the finest critical work since Taine[30] to a very bad one written to prove that Rousseau was Romanticism and vice versa.[31] Ones concurrence with the first judgment or the second depends largely upon the disposition in which one approaches the book.

Academically, the second is justified providing we admit that the book is not limited to Rousseau. Startling errors in detail indicated by Professors Baldensperger, Cazamian, and others,[32] are no more offensive than Lasserre's conception of Romanticism. For him there is only one Romanticism, a spirit of revolt persisting from Rousseau to our own time. Now, to regard it thus an bloc is to overlook many nuances, to fail to see that not only were many Romantics politically liberal and conservative, by turns, but also that even in literature their liberalism was not consistently orthodox.[32] Stendhal, Mérimée, Balzac, and the young Sainte-Beauve, who were certainly not Anti-Romantics, are not treated by Lasserre because they do not fit his thesis. A definition of Romanticism which omits them simply does not include all available data; a history without them fails to report significant facts. Further, Lasserre's idea of Romanticism affected his method by permitting him to look at only one side of each personality treated, so that he often impales his men on formulae instead of analysing, rearranging and, only then, judging their ideas. Even his apt criticism is thus weakened by his prejudices, to such an extent that Gaston Deschamps felt that Lasserre wanted to suppress the whole nineteenth century as a measure of public safety.[33]

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[29] Idem.

[30] R. de Gourmont, Promenades litteraires, III, p.71.

[31] E. H. Wright, The Meaning of Rousseau, p.5.

[32] See Bibliography and especially Professor F. Baldensperger's review in RCHL, June 10, 1907.

[33] In his review in Le Temps, April 28, 1907.

Yet, far from being a routine piece of literary history, the book is less a retrospective study than an attempt to assess an existing state of affairs.[34] Its Counter-Revolutionary nature is quite evident. It is the influence of the defenders of the Revolution which interests the critic; hence his emphasis on Quinet, Michelet and their like; hence also the omissions above mentioned. Lasserre is eager to show that both literary and political Romanticism have persisted down to the present. His book is a political pamphlet. The jury which judged it as a doctoral dissertation was quite right, academically, in refusing him on this account the mention très honorable without which the degree is professionally useless.[35]

What gives Le Romantisme français its significance as a document on Lasserre's evolution is the new vigor which politics infuses in the work. The basic ideas go back at least to the Morale de Nietzsche, the conceptions of Classicism and Romanticism are those present in the article on Leonardo of 1895. His tendency to generalize dates from his first contact with the Action Française. What is new is the violent tone. Lasserre calls names--"fol androgyne, atroce romancier (Jean-Jacques); poète d'intelligence rudimentaire, philosophe ridicule, moraliste nul (Hugo); le plus detestable historien du XIXe siecle (Michelet)." His formulae strike fire--Romanticism is "un désordre qui...bouleverse toute l'économie de la nature humaine civilisée... .."[36]; the Revolution, "une révélation et un miracle, mais une révélation sans Dieu, sans Messie, un miracle sans thaumaturge."[37]

In such epithets and formulae, the mark of the pamphlet rather than of the dissertation, is discernible a full view of the Lasserre of whom we have, in the past few years, caught only glimpses. They betray his haste to classify and conclude, to sit in definitive judgment.

[34] Le Romantisme français, p.535. All references are to the commonest edition, that of 1919.

[35] Revue Universitaire, April 15, 1907.

[36] Le Romantisme français, p.509.

[37] Idem, p.509.

This anxiety characterizes his whole critique of Romanticism. He has become so permeated with the doctrines of the Action française that they determine even the nature of his best known work.

They will go on determining that of all his writings until the War. Then he will spend the rest of his life retreating from this position.

Chapter Three

LASSERRE AS OFFICIAL CRITIC OF THE ACTION FRANÇAISE. CRUSADE AGAINST THE UNIVERSITY[1]

After the academic failure of his thesis, Lasserre joined the staff of the new Action Française daily newspaper, taking a leave of absence from his teaching in 1907, and moving his family to Paris. There he lost no time in confirming the stand taken in the Romantisme français and in declaring his allegiance to the group and to Maurras. In the next seven years he wrote several hundred critical articles, made speeches, lectured, gave courses at the Institut d'Action Française, tutored young Royalists, wrote two novels, and carried on a long, one-sided campaign against the University; he avowed himself a Monarchist, Anti-Democrat, Anti-Parliamentarian, Militarist, Nationalist, and décentralisateur. His writings show him an Anti-Romantic, Anti-German, Anti-Protestant and Anti-Semite as well. And although he realised that he was writing for a propaganda sheet[2] there is no sign that the fact bothered him seriously.

I

Admitting no modification of his stand against Romanticism, and Revolution, Lasserre denies that his thesis fails to produce a substitute for the fundamental disorder of the nineteenth century. His critique, he says, was founded on Aristotle and the Ancients, who--

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[1]Since much of the material in this chapter is inaccessible in America, as much use as possible will be made of quotations from Lasserre's un-republished work.

[2]AF, May 17, 1909.

[3]Preface to second ed., Le Romantisme français, to which Lasserre's reference as the 4th is an error.

> ...nous font concevoir un ordre, une hiérarchie nécessaire et légitime des facultés psychiques, qui caractérise l'homme digne de ce nom, qui met, pour ainsi dire, dans l'animal humain une nature humaine. Cette hiérarchie subordonne la sensibilité à l'intelligence, l'imagination à la raison, les puissances affectives et spontanées à la puissance réflexive....Renversement de cette hiérarchie, usurpation par la sensibilité et l'imagination de l'hégémonie de l'intelligence et de la raison, voilà le Romantisme...[4]

More than ever he insists that his book is a Counter-Revolutionary weapon. And in his new articles he extends his thesis to the "appendages" of Romanticism--Art for Art, Symbolism, Parnassianism and Naturalism.[5] Art for Art reminds him of a "petit travail de Chinois";[6] the Parnasse he says has durci et cassé French poetics, and he regrets the influence of Hérédia.[7] Symbolism he considers poor in meaning and that the Symbolists select for praise the weakest parts of Racine enrages him.[8] Yet his greatest severity is reserved for the Naturalists:

> ....Il y a des souffrances morales et matérielles, des lieux et des conditions de misère pour le corps et pour l'âme, dont le nom seul parle si fortement à notre imagination que la peinture littéraire qui les détaille est odieusement superflue.[9]
> ....naturaliste, ce qui veut dire terriblement lourd et indigeste...[10]

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[4] Idem, p. xxiii.

[5] "Et ne sont-ce pas là les noms de trois étapes dans la mort progressive de la littérature?"--Contre le Romantisme, AF, May 24, 1910.

[6] Idem.

[7] Jean Moréas, AF, June 29, 1912.

[8] Idem, Dec. 22, 1908.

[9] Mme Delarue-Madrus, AF, Nov. 24, 1908.

[10] Quelques romans, AF, April 13, 1909.

....Vraiment cette esthétique naturaliste, dont les audaces terrifiaient nos pères, se révèle, à nos regards désabusés, comme quelque chose de tout à fait coco....[11]

....Un auteur peut fort bien peindre....des personnages de volonté débile, misérable, ou d'humeur neurasthénique, mais à la condition de les mettre en contraste avec des êtres normaux ou bien de parler d'eux sur un ton et dans un sentiment qui les jugent, qui les situent à leur vraie place dans la hiérarchie des mortels.[12]

Thus he makes himself appear the enemy of most contemporary literature as well as of the contemporary Republic.[13] The hierarchy he hoped to restore to literature by a return to Classicism he proposed to restore to politics by the return of the House of Guise.[14] He advocated sharp measures toward Protestants who invaded public life.

....Que cette minorité aigre, ambitieuse, plaintive, rageuse, forte de la cohésion de ses membres et de l'incroyable ténacité de ses rancunes....que cette minorité, dis-je, réfléchisse. Plusieurs fois déjà il lui est arrivé de porter ce pays de France à un degré redoutable d'agacement....[15]

But for collusion between Protestants and Jews, he believes, the Dreyfus affair would never have arisen. The Jew, also, is a disintegrating factor in society; too much capital is in Jewish hands;[16] Paris is being cheapened by Jewish Barnums;[17] Jewish influence is felt in education.[18] Israel is a foreign race, inevitably the enemy of the French traditions of family and moeurs,

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[11]Idem.

[12]It is not inappropriate here to call attention to the Socialism of Zola and his rôle in the Dreyfus Case. M. René Doumic, AF, Jan. 19, 1909.

[13]M. Félix Le Dantec, AF, July 20, 1912.

[14]Auguste Comte, moralliste, AF, July 7, 1908.

[15]La Révolte protestante, Idem, Sept. 14, 1909.

[16]La Conversion d'un juif, Idem, Oct. 5, 1909.

[17]M. Romain Rolland, Idem, June 22, 1909.

[18]La République et l'école, Idem, Oct. 31, 1909.

and the weakening of these effected by the Republic and by Romanticism has made the Jewish menace even greater. Anti-Semitism is a patriotic duty. "...Jusqu'a la restauration du pouvoir royal, le cri: A bas les juifs! est consubstantiel à celui de: Vive la France! Le Roi, en remettant les juifs à leur place, sera lui-même le modérateur puissant et sage de l'antisémitisme...."[19] Moreover, France will not be strong enough to avenge the defeat of 1870 until the Dreyfus problem is settled; thus the Army is right in seeking to justify his condemnation.[20]

Safety depends on reducing the intellectual as well as the military prestige of Germany. Latin culture is all akin; the German must always be unassimilable. He still deplores the German influence over French thought, and his enthusiasm for M. Bédier's Légendes épiques is largely inspired by the latter's scepticism regarding their German origins.[21] Even Nietzsche, no less a warped mind for being a useful guide through anarchy, Lasserre now regards as unhealthy.[22] And he objects to a Franco-German friendship like that of Jean-Christophe for Olivier on the ground that it is impossible.[23]

Such judgments represented the official Action française attitude. It was in their name that the critic departed on his second crusade.

II

A partial explanation of the increased vigor with which Lasserre expressed his principles is offered by the developments in French politics since 1897. The discrediting of the army under Waldeck-Rousseau, the separation of Church and State under Combes in 1902, the loss of French prestige at Fashoda, Casablanca, Agadir and Algesiras, were disquieting to those who wanted a

[19] La Conversion d'un juif, Oct. 5, 1909.
[20] AF, Feb. 22, 1909 and July 26, 1910.
[21] Les Epopées françaises d'après M. Joseph Bédier, Idem, Sept. 20, 1913.
[22] La Vie de Nietzsche, Idem, Nov. 2, 1909.
[23] Romain Rolland, Idem, Oct. 11, 1910.

strongly united France ready to face an imperialistic and ambitious Germany. Eventually felt even by Leftists like Millerand and Briand, the influence of such a state of affairs could only drive a conservative deeper in his conservatism. The fact that after the war had proved France strong Lasserre was able to lay aside so many of his pre-war doctrines suggests that the critic had been among those who were profoundly disturbed by this situation.

In all events, it was for political reasons that he attacked the University.

Already in 1900 he had twice shown himself hostile to it,[24] feeling that it was a center for Republican propaganda controlled by Jews, Protestants, Masons and other partisans of the "un-French" morale laïque. Now, in a severer mood, he condemns it as a Germanized monograph-factory, ruled so tyranically by the professors Seignobos and Lanson that students are forced to adopt their methods.[25]

He hints that these men are tools of the Republicans and that the specialization they advocate is a blow to general culture dealt by the partisans of democracy. His view opposes diametrically the educational reforms of 1902, and calls for long preparation in the traditional disciplines, broad general culture, and late specialization. On this basis he was already preparing a general attack, it appears, when a political event brought the whole matter to a head.

Among the books inspired by talk of the canonization of Jeanne d'Arc had been one by a relatively unknown Lycée professor, F. Thalamas, at which the patriots of the Action Française had taken particular offense.[26] In 1908 Thalamas' cours libre in pedagogy at the Sorbonne became the scene of riots when the Camelots du Roi, Action Française youth organization, demonstrated in the lecture hall.[27] For his part in the disturbance

[24] Opinions, RAF, May 1, 1900, and Un Entrepreneur de morale, Idem, June 1, 1900.

[25] La Barbarie en Sorbonne, AF, Aug. 4, 1908.

[26] Jeanne d'Arc, l'histoire et la légende, Paris, Paclot, 1904.

[27] M. Thalamas conspué, reported in the Gazette de France, Dec. 4 and 11, 1908.

Lasserre's friend Maurice Pujo, a Camelot leader, was brought to trial and sentenced to five months detention.

To his friends Pujo became a political martyr for whose plight they held responsible the same Dean, Alfred Croiset, who had presided at Lasserre's soutenance de thèse at the Sorbonne. Croiset had testified against Pujo at the trial. Lasserre immediately attacked Croiset in an article which purported to be the first of a series.[28] So much did the subject grow, however, that he was forced to produce his material in book form; M. Alfred Croiset, historien de la démocratie athénienne, came off the presses the following June.[29] This was an act of war in all its 121 pages, dedicated to Pujo whose imprisonment had paid for "....l'honneur d'avoir vengé d'un outrage officiel la mémoire sacrée de Jeanne d'Arc ..." and prefaced by Charles Maurras himself.[30]

Croiset had recently published his Démocraties antiques,[31] a book by no means so bad as Lasserre painted it. His assumption that Democracy is the highest form of government the race has attained was widely held by political scientists of the time.[32] To this Lasserre of course objected on principle; in addition, he was anxious to discredit Croiset both as an individual, because of the rôle the Dean had played in jailing Pujo, and as a head of the university. Lasserre later denied that there was a third motive--one of reprisal against one of his former examiners.[33]

Lasserre's main charge against Croiset as a historian is that the Dean twisted facts, a moral as well as academic issue. We are invited to determine for ourselves what part of the Dean's falsification, academic and judiciary, was caused by his fraudulent intention and what by mental incapacity.[34] Lasserre speaks of "....la débilité de la raison, la légèreté foncière,

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[28] M. Alfred Croiset, AF, Jan. 26, 1909.

[29] Nouvelle librairie nationale, 1909.

[30] Printed separately also in AF, June 12, 1909.

[31] Paris, Flammarion, 1909.

[32] Cf. J. W. Burgess, Reminiscences of an American Scholar, in which (p.254) he speaks of democracy as "the Ultima Thule of political history."

[33] Le Romantisme français, p.iii.

[34] M. Alfred Croiset, historien..., pp.48,49.

l'insensibilité brutale et l'improbité souple qui caractérisent le doyen de la faculté des lettres."[35] Croiset's work is a "...travail de falsification."[36] A child could make the chronological computations which Croiset bungles.[37] The Dean is a "polisson."[38] It is apparent to the critic that "...cet homme, doyen ou simple appariteur, pense et écrit dans un demi-sommeil, qu'il vaudrait peut-être mieux appeler une grande lâcheté intellectuelle,"[39] and his writing is a "...phraséologie qui semble née de la collaboration de M. Prudhomme avec Bouvard et Pécuchet."[40] But these are but peripheral to the central charge of falsification.

From studying the democracies of classical antiquity may be derived lessons applicable mutatis mutandis to any democracy. Fustel de Coulanges, in his Cité antique,[41] had advanced the thesis that strong religious obligations built around family worship of household gods had determined the political and social patterns of the ancient state. With the breakdown of traditions and the coming of Democracy, religious devotion was crowded out by the cultus of the res publica, and political decadence soon followed. On the other hand, Croiset had regarded Democracy as the inevitable accompaniment of progress in civilization, a structural change corresponding to new needs. It is here that he and Lasserre are really most at odds. Lasserre follows, and cites, Fustel.

Louis Dimier's Les Maîtres de la contre-revolution au XIXe siècle treats Fustel as one of the forerunners of the Action Française.[42] Charles Maurras had also leaned heavily on Fustel in forming his own doctrines.[43] And Lasserre frequently restates Fustel's thesis. "Athènes est morte de la démocratie, après

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[35]Idem, p.114.
[36]Idem, p.52.
[37]Idem, p.75.
[38]Idem.
[39]Idem, p.64.
[40]Idem, p.114.
[41]Paris, Durand, 1865.
[42]Paris, Nouvelle librairie nationale, n.d.
[43]M. Alfred Croiset, historien..., p.x.

s'être soutenue pendant deux cents ans, au prix d'une réaction perpétuelle....[44] He also points out that all Greek art from Homer to Phidias was produced before the establishment of Democracy and that decadence in poetry, architecture, sculpture and painting begins with the installation of democratic government. Moreover, the works of Thucydides, Socrates, Aristotle and Plato, although done under the democratic regime, was done by men opposed to democratic institutions.[45] And now even as then, Lasserre goes on, democracy means corruption, vote buying, promises and official favors, and eventually the unadorned exchange of public funds for popular support.[46]

All this is the work of a man who, but recently, had been a professor in the French University! Now the die was irretrievably cast.

His book on Croiset finished, Lasserre returned immediately to his newspaper campaign and from then on to the end of his association with the Action Française articles appeared in a scarcely interrupted stream. The high point was reached in 1912, when he published his Doctrine officielle de l'université,[47] which, uninspiring to read though it is, has the merit of displaying one whole side of Lasserre which would not otherwise be visible. In it his polemic talent shows to its greatest advantage.

Lasserre's general complaint against the University is that it has become the agent of forces seeking a breakdown of the national French culture. The studies of languages, of history, of philosophy, of science and of literature are all involved.[48]

The critic assumes that one studies a foreign language for one's general cultural development, for the greater mastery of one's native tongue which such study affords, and not for the commercial profit of knowing a foreign speech. The only excuse for teaching foreign

[44] Idem, p.93.
[45] Idem, p.107.
[46] Idem, p.102.
[47] Paris, Société du Mercure de France, 1912.
[48] La Doctrine officielle..., passim.

languages in the university is that this will increase clearness and proficiency in the use of French. Latin is admittedly the most useful as an intellectual discipline, and should thus be most emphasized.--And yet the university system employs the "direct method," tends to emphasize modern foreign languages at the expense of Latin, and seems quite uninterested in the general problem involved.

Moreover, he continues, the sciences are magnified out of all proportion. They, too, constitute primarily a discipline for culture of the mind and should be studied with this in view. Too early specialization in the sciences cannot but work against the full, all-round development of the individual. Yet the university encourages early scientific specialization, teaches science with small regard for its mind-developing possibilities, and crams full of interesting but confusing information a head still unable to cope with so much detail.

In a like manner, the study of letters has become a historical exercise with the production of monographs regarded as the summum bonum. Here again, too early specialization drives students to examining minute details of penmanship, comparing editions, counting syllables. To Lasserre, who regards letters as a means of forming the honnête homme rather than the specialist, this is Germanization. Had he considered the matter himself with an eye to history, Lasserre himself would have seen that the historical approach to literature was an attempt to shield the study from the winds of doctrine, to make it independent of whim and dogma; he did not do so. He disliked Romanticism, and the historical method was an outgrowth of Romanticism; moreover, it was German. What, he asked, was it doing in the French University?

He asked the same questions of philosophy and history. Philosophy had become the historical investigation of the works of philosophers, rather than a discipline for handling ideas. Similarly, history had abandoned the study of broad fields for that of details so minor that the whole perspective of events was lost. Everywhere was specialized research; nowhere was concern for the formation of cultured individuals.

Such a state of affairs, Lasserre argues, could be brought about by one thing only--the interest of high parties in the state educational system in promulgating a political thesis, the thesis of Republicanism. The liberalism of the Sorbonne was famous, since that institution had come to the defence of Dreyfus. Several professors, like Lavisse and Croiset, had recently lectured in that hot-bed of liberalism, Madame Dick May's Ecole des Hautes Etudes Sociales. To Lasserre it seemed plain that such men were aiming to destroy the élite, to make culture democratic, so that each man, outside his own field of specialization, would be no more than the equal of his fellows. French education was being made a weapon against the preëminence of aristocracy, even aristocracy of intellect.

Moreover, the heads of the university had so arranged that their institution could carry on a work of perpetual indoctrination. Lanson dominated the study of literature; Durckheim, the sociologist, who gave the pedagogy course which all students were required to follow, was a similar anti-traditionalist who fought against the old and salutary idea of the organization of French life. Through such men, the university successfully indoctrinated young teachers and future teachers alike. And since the cause of the malady was political, its cure must be political also.

Such were the essentials of Lasserre's argument.

Lasserre and the Action Française were not alone in attacking the Sorbonne. Henri Massis and Alfred de Tarde were also campaigning against it in their Esprit de la nouvelle Sorbonne,[49] and for like cultural reasons. The Ligue pour la culture française had enlisted even several academicians. The thunderings of Péguy in his Cahiers are well remembered. Lasserre's part by no means eclipsed those of the others.

Lasserre might have succeeded better had not his political connections been so well known. The Sorbonne could afford to pay scant attention to his charges because of the visible prejudice in his work. His challenges to debate and other invitations to answer him publicly were regularly ignored.

[49]Paris, MF, 1911. M. Baldensperger errs in attributing this book to Lasserre L'Avant-guerre dans la littérature française, p.96.

The acrimony of his articles as well as that of his book explains why this should be. He invites Catholic fathers to go to jail rather than obey the education laws,[50] calls the University a league of Jews, Protestants and Masons,[51] casts aspersions on Lavisse,[52] calls Lévy-Bruhl a dangerous Jew-moralist[53] Durckheim a "farceur Juif morose,"[54] Lanson a "malfaiteur public"[55] and objects to one's calling Aulard "savant et scrupuleux."[56] Such acerbity was reason enough to make the public let his contentions go unheeded. His book, and the articles on the same subject, went for nothing.

III

Fortunately his crusade against the Sorbonne did not stop Lasserre's activity as a literary critic. In spite of his polemic work he had time to consider an imposing number of the main literary figures.

In practice, his definition of Romanticism precluded approval of Parnassianism, Symbolism, Naturalism and Impressionism; and few writers were uninfluenced by at least one of these movements. Loyalty to the Action Française made it hard to like writers who, even though free of Romanticism, still disagreed with his group. He wanted to adhere to no system, to judge the work of writers as one would judge shoemakers by their shoes;[57] and, disliking systems, he prefers Saint-Beuve to Taine and Brunètiere. Yet, although he admires Saint-Beuve as he does Fustel and, sometimes, Renan, he feels that their writing sympathetically of faiths admired but not shared represents an outworn critical attitude.[58] We are, he says, in a "siècle de fer qui écrasera les nations sans principes arrêtés et sans partis pris

[50] La République et l'école, AF, Oct. 31, 1909.
[51] Idem.
[52] A l'Académie, Idem, Dec. 14, 1909.
[53] Moralistes juifs, Idem, Nov. 30, 1909.
[54] Idem.
[55] Gustave Lanson, Idem, March 19, 1911.
[56] Montyon, Idem, Aug. 10, 1909.
[57] Jérôme et Jean Tharaud..., Idem, Aug. 10, 1912.
[58] Madame d'Arbouville, Idem, March 29, 1910.

rigoureux..."[59] And, in practice, Lasserre has a definite parti pris.

> Etre «antique» et «contemporain»-contemporain, c'est à dire vivant, par la puissance de l'imagination, du sentiment, et de la sensibilité, par la vertu de ce mystère des entrails qu'est le don, qu'est la passion et la force de créer--antique, c'est à dire universel, humain, par ordre qui épure la flamme, qui en fait de la lumière en la distribuant selon les lois, au fond rigoureuses, et dont des modèles d'application existent...[60]
> Et deux choses font l'artiste; des dons individuels d'abord, une sensibilité supérieurement intense et subtile, une imagination active, chaleureuse, surabondante et la passion d'exercer ces facultés; puis une pleine participation à la plus parfaite éducation de l'esprit...[61]

Sainte-Beuve had advanced a similar program, but Sainte-Beuve had not been a member of the Action Française. In the criticism he actually wrote, Lasserre placed the emphasis on the antique.

His favorite nineteenth century authors are Balzac and Stendhal, the former because Lasserre likes his traditionalism and his conception of human nature[62] and the latter because he is "le plus honnête homme du XIXe siècle."[63] Flaubert cuts a poor figure; his perfection is "demi-morte."[64] Of more modern novelists, Bourget now appears to the critic most worthy of being called maître, for his Catholicism gives him a view of life undistorted by Individualism, Socialism and Democracy. [65] Lasserre gives him the highest compliment of which he is capable: "...les inventions de Paul Bourget ont cette

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[59] André Lichtenberger, Idem, April 23, 1911.
[60] Moréas Critique, Idem, June 28, 1910.
[61] Les Papiers de Stendhal, Idem, Aug. 11, 1908.
[62] Honoré de Balzac, Idem, Sept. 16, 1911.
[63] Les Papiers de Stendhal, loc. cit.
[64] Moréas critique, loc. cit.
[65] Paul Bourget,...Idem, July 14, 1914.

généralité latente qui caractérise les classiques."[66] His enthusiasm for Barrès is also high, but somewhat wavering. In 1909 he hails Colette Baudoche warmly,[67] but in 1912 he confesses himself less deeply moved[68] and in 1913, although he lauds Barrès' torrential abundance as all the more powerful because restrained, he feels that Léopold, in the Colline inspirée, is worrisomely disorderly.[69]

Anatole France is still a problem to the critic who, in 1908, finds in the Ile des pingouins a raillery comparable in spirit to the spirit of the Discours sur l'inégalité! "Le livre n'est pas plaisant; il est accablant...."[70] Yet, the following year, Lasserre shows his respect for France. "Anatole France a beau nous attrister depuis dix ans. Comment renier les plaisirs d'esprit qu'il nous causait au temps où sa moquerie était universelle?..."[71] And in 1913 he maintains that France is a great master, although blind to the dangers menacing the country,[72] while adding, the following year, that he is not confident of France's sincerity.[73]

The problem of judging a writer whose ideas conflicted with the program of the Action Française arose again in the case of Romain Rolland. Characteristically, Lasserre is at first harsh and later modifies his position. In 1909 Rolland "...réunit un artiste fertile, délicat, touchant, profond même et un esprit odieusement faux." Like his hero, Jean-Christophe, Rolland seems to Lasserre bewildered but complacent in the modern chaos. The critic likes the first three volumes better than the rest of Jean-Christophe, for the latter part, he says, paints French life too disorderly to be true.[74] The next year Lasserre is milder; he is anxious that Rolland create heroes less effeminate than Olivier and less barbarian than Jean-Christophe, but the disapproval is less

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[66] M. Marcel Prévost, Idem, Aug. 17, 1909.
[67] Colette Baudoche, Idem, Feb. 23, 1909.
[68] Maurice Barrès, Idem, April 7, 1912.
[69] La Colline inspirée, Idem, Feb. 23, 1913.
[70] Anatole France, Idem, Oct. 20, 1908.
[71] La Succession d'Anatole France, Idem, July 27, 1909.
[72] Un Livre sur Anatole France, Idem, Oct. 5, 1913.
[73] Anatole France: La Révolte des Anges, Idem, April 15, 1914.
[74] Romain Rolland, Idem, June 22, 1909.

firmly marked.[75] And he is still of a divided opinion as late as 1912.[76]

Novelists of whom he wholly approves are Edmond Jaloux, Boylesve, Bazin, Bordeaux and, with less enthusiasm, the Tharauds,[77] none of whom seem to have attained the stature of those of whom his approval was less complete.

His habit of first condemning and then modifying his stand reappears in the case of Bergson. The latter's philosophy was disliked by the Action Française; he was a Jew; his ideas seemed to support the theory of inevitable evolution which Lasserre abhorred. Moreover, Lasserre and his friends were ardent intellectualists. Bergson's thought, which the critic calls "animalisme quintessencié"[78] can, he says, be made to sanction an individualism like that of the Romantics. In Bergson's psychology... "il semble qu'à son insu M. Bergson ait exclusivement copié le tableau qu'il trace de l'âme humaine, sur les modalités de l'âme les plus faibles et les plus relâchés..." and he dismisses Bergsonian intuition as something in which he recognized only "le jeu de la sensibilité et des viscères..."[79] He calls Bergson barbarous, calls attention to his race,[80] and expresses extreme scepticism regarding the value of his influence. This is in 1910.

In 1913 he objects simply to Bergson's popularity. In Lasserre's opinion Bergsonism is indefinite enough to justify conflicting ideas. He deplores its effect upon the laity, which it stimulates to talk nonsense. He does not believe that Bergson courts common esteem, but he believes that this esteem, unsought, is characteristic of a time given over to vagueness and emotionalism. Although these judgments are visibly connected with Lasserre's earlier quarrel with Bergson, their strikingly gentler tone and their caution could

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[75] Idem, Idem, Oct. 11, 1910.

[76] Henry Bordeaux, Idem, March 17, 1912.

[77] See: René Boylesve, Idem, Aug. 3, 1909; Quelques Romans, Idem, April 13, 1909; Henry Bordeaux, Idem, Nov. 9, 1909; Les Frères Tharaud, Idem, Sept. 2, 1911, etc.

[78] La philosophie de M. Bergson, III, Idem, Aug. 25, 1910.

[79] Idem, p. iv, Sept. 6, 1910.

[80] Idem, Aug. 9, 1910.

well be regarded as the harbinger of the change in Lasserre which, at this time, is imminent.[81]

What part was played by the Action Française during this period in determining Lasserre's attitude toward foreign writers (other than German) is an obscure question, but from his scattered comments one gathers that to the Nationalist a book could be in the Mediterranean tradition or it could be barbare; here again there was no middle ground.

In almost every foreign writer he finds some glaring deficiency. Whitman strikes him as an American Hugo, messianistically inspired to sing the song of himself and of the amorphous, uncultivated American masses.[82] William James has suffered from lack of contact with a civilizing tradition, and from too much contact with Hegel.[83] Barrett Wendell he likes, but he feels that to Wendell the French were as strange as Chinamen.[84] First among the Americans he places Mrs. Wharton, whose portraits of the second-generation rich make him think that America could use a bit of French civilization.[85]

Of the Englishmen he has read, John Ruskin strikes Lasserre as mildly insane.[86] Carlyle is powerful, but useful only for blasting falsehood. "...Il n'y a aucune clarté à tirer de lui..."[87]

Reading the Russians leaves him with a similar feeling of unbalance: the good in them is available only after extensive triage. He reproaches Melchior de Vogüé for having forgotten precisely this in his Roman russe. Lasserre finds Gorky unstable, corrupted by Tolstoy, Hugo, Michelet and Nietzsche, unable to create heroes uninfected by the spiritual disorientation of their author, and "...un esprit antisocial jusqu'au nihilisme..."[88] Yet even so, Gorky fares somewhat

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[81] Une Critique de Bergson, Idem, June 30, 1913.

[82] Walt Whitman, Idem, April 27, 1909.

[83] La Philosophie de William James, Idem, May 10, 1910.

[84] Idées d'un Américain sur la France, Idem, Oct. 13, 1908.

[85] Un Roman américain, Idem, April 27, 1909.

[86] John Ruskin, Idem, March 30, 1909.

[87] Thomas Carlyle, Idem, July 20, 1909. All of Lasserre's English reading was done in translation.

[88] Le Vicomte de Vogüé, Idem, March 26, 1910, and Maxime Gorky, Idem, Nov. 17, 1908.

better at his hands than the Scandinavians Ibsen and Brandes, and the Fleming Verhaeren.[89]

Thus, since the only foreigner aside from Mrs. Wharton of whom Lasserre approves during this time is the relatively unimportant Palacio Valdès,[90] it must be admitted that at this time foreigners were, to him, barbarians indeed.

Such was Lasserre in the various[91] departments of his work. By no twisting of words could he be called a liberal. His judgments, moderated during the later years though we have seen them indeed to be, were based firmly on Action Française doctrine, even as late as 1914.

Yet, in 1914, a change was close at hand.

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[89] Emile Verhaeren, Idem, Nov. 16, 1909, and Ceux qui abrutissent le peuple, Idem, Nov. 16, 1909.

[90] For his, Alegria del capitan Ribot.

[91] Consideration of Lasserre's novels written during these years, and generally of his writings on music, is omitted here as immaterial to his evolution as a critic.

Chapter Four

THE TURN TOWARD LIBERALISM CRUSADE AGAINST THE CHAPELLES

In 1920 Lasserre wrote to a friend a letter which furnishes the key to the changes in his political thought between 1914 and 1925.

> ....Or, la Revue universelle où l'on réclame à cor et à cris ma copie, est très bien fait, quoique trop resserrée. Mais je ne puis y avoir d'expression parce que je suis nettement opposé à certaines de ses directions philosophiques et politiques. C'est là le gros oeuvre et il m'est désagréable d'y être adossé dans mon rayon littéraire, attendu qu'il me paraît posé de travers, pas pour la réussite immédiate, mais par rapport aux principes féconds pour l'avenir...Malgré ma liberté de jeu apparente, l'appareil strangulatoire de Maurras joue là. Bainville, très intelligent, mais exigu et de peu de souffle s'en accomode. Moi, j'en ai assez même dans cette seconde zone...C'est par l'effet d'une situation qui ne répond pas à notre esprit. J'en suis à me demander si je ne vais pas abdiquer toute prudence et essayer d'écrire n'importe où ce que je pense, je veux dire réaliser ma ligne que je sens très centrale. Il y a à l'Action française, à la Revue universelle beaucoup d'intelligence. Il me semble y voir plus clair. Certes le régime se liquide. Mais il va se liquider dans la République, pour le moment, et un long moment, une République certainement différente de ce qui a été depuis 1870...plus tard y aura-t-il un bonapartisme heureux, une autorité engendrée par la nation renouvelée? C'est possible...Non, de la politique avec Vesins, de la politique

> sérieuse avec Daudet! Je paie cher l'indolence et l'imprévoyance de jeunesse qui m'a fait laisser croire que j'en faisais...On va me dire: mais vous faites de la littérature, de la philo. Je réponds: aujourd'hui on est toujours adossé à une politique et je voudrais prudemment et en sage béarnais achever (j'ai commencé) à montrer combien celle-là n'est pas la mienne. C'est à dire, j'en prends, j'en laisse. Mais pas le roi, pas ce brevet d'aveuglement.[1]

Predominant in this letter is Lasserre's determination to escape the intellectual influence of Maurras. Manifestations of it appear in all the departments of his work during this period of transition.

I

Lasserre's career during the war and directly after it furnishes an interesting commentary on his discontent with his old politics. In 1914 he stopped writing literary criticism for the Action Française. The next year he took a suppléance de troisième at the Lycée Michelet, replacing a professor who had been mobilised and, at the same time, sealing a truce with the state educational system. In October, 1916, he was given a suppléance de deuxième at the same school. In 1919 he took a congé d'inactivité in order to accept a professorship at the Collège Stanislas, from which he resigned in 1922 only to accept a chair at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes. He had made peace, then, with the regime not long after the beginning of the war.

In preceding chapters we have seen how great were the factors of national security and of the safety of the status quo in determining Lasserre's stand with Maurras and reaction. As a Nationalist he had reproached the Republic for its weakness. But the war had come to prove that the Republic was at least strong enough to repel invasion. In 1915 Lasserre's hopes are staked on the Republic, on the belief that, in the phrase of his letter of 1920, "le régime va se liquider dans la République."

[1]Letter to Mlle Anne-Marie Gasztowtt, Sept. 21, 1920.

He drops his talk of royalism, and if, in 1917, he still agrees with Maurras as to the necessity of decentralization, in the years following he is less inclined to advocate other reforms which would, in one way or another, call for any extensive remodeling of the existing order.[2] He favors, as always, government by the middle class. He hates Communism and Socialism and while he has no love for the speculators and profiteers who grow rich by public exploitation, he likes even less the social propagandists who capitalize the existence of these, and calls the philosopher Alain strictly to account for exposing both sides of a social question without indicating which side is right.[3] Marxian theories of class distinction and its function in the processes of economic determinism he brands brutally simplisitc.[4] While France needs so much strength, boring from within cannot be tolerated.

All this bears out the thesis that when Lasserre saw that the status quo was safe without Maurras' protection he dropped away from the Master. In 1921 the last link was broken when he stopped writing the occasional articles on music which he had been contributing to the Action Française under the pseudonym of Jean Darnaudat. In all of Lasserre's writing about Germany, in his new studies on Renan, in his crusade against the Chapelles littéraires--the chief of his activities during this period--there is visible a progressive moderation in his ideas. He has abandoned the authoritarianism of the Action Française and is evolving toward the liberalism of the final years of his life.

Le Germanisme et l'esprit humain[5] published in 1916, was a protest against the movement to exclude all German art, literature and music from French life. To the cultural ostracism of those Germans who made their lack of tradition a positive virtue--who thought that their culture had kept a closer contact with nature and

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[2]F. Mistral, poète, moraliste, citoyen, chapter: le Jacobinisme centralisateur.

[3]Le Philosophe Alain, RU, Feb. 1, 1921.

[4]Bolchéviste ou moraliste, Idem, 1921, Tome 4, p.358.

[5]Le Germanisme et l'esprit humain, RB, 1914,(2)-1915, pp.385, 425.

a keener intuition to guarantee her supremacy over the heritors of the Graeco-Latin tradition--Lasserre did not object, since a true culture is essentially universal; only in its minor aspects may it be classified as German or English or French. What has made French culture so great is that it has so much in it of the universal. "L'esprit français est universel et humain, ou il n'est pas."[6]

Another old distinction of Lasserre's draws a firm line between Germans who remained respectful of the tried tradition and those who did not. Goethe is of the former. "L'application didactique qu'il porte en toutes choses, et qui est un honorable trait allemand, mais qui, chez lui, n'est ni paralysée par l'embarras d'une cervelle pesante, ni égarée par les nuages, le ramène sans cesse aux grands lieux communs de philosophie naturelle qui sont comme les carrefours de l'intelligence des modernes..."[7] Heine, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer are included in the same category. In the other are those in whose works"...la Germanie peut reconnaître l'épanouissement de la forme de pensée qu'elle revendique, avec Fichte, comme lui étant propre..."[8] Every occidental philosophy except this has produced a method which can be applied to any problem; the Germanic method alone is incapable of being generalized. Even Kant is somewhat inculpated, since "...Kant est un jardinier qui, quant à lui, conserve du respect pour l'arrangement traditionnel du Jardin; mais il élabore et sème la graine là où jaillira la plante monstrueuse qui ne tardera pas à devorer et saccager tout.[9]

The influence of the latter German group had seized Europe at a moment when classic philosophy was confronted with more new problems resulting from changed conditions in politics, commerce and science, than could be resolved at once. This situation the group exploited, in order to "...déposséder les terres du classicisme de leurs titres à la direction intellectuelle du genre humain, de renverser la hiérarchie des valeurs à son

[6] Cinquante ans de pensée française, p.107.
[7] Idem, 110.
[8] Idem, 116.
[9] Idem, 127.

profit propre, en proclamant la superiorité de l'inconscient, du primitif, du barbare sur le réfléchi et le policé..."[10] This group must be defeated. "...Le monde et l'Allemagne ellemême n'en seront délivrés que par un fait matériel: la totale défaite des armes allemandes."[11]

Until the victory, Lasserre refrained from other utterances on the subject of interior and exterior politics, but as soon as the goal was reached he returned to the old problems. A restatement of his views was necessitated by the conditions of the peace. For this his vehicles were two of the magazines which sprang up after the war, the ill-fated Minerve française and the Revue universelle of Jacques Bainville.

He has scant sympathy for those who believe that the war was fought only for the economic betterment of the governing class; such opinions are possible only for charlatans or their dupes.[12] He still expects literature to be patriotic, and reproaches writers who speak of the war from any other point of view.[13] He commends, for example, Jean Pierrefeu's Chronique du C.G.Q. equally for its "...souci de justice et d'équité..." and for its "tact du patriotisme le plus pur."[14] And he is moved to protest against Colette's Chéri by his inability to imagine how a young man could sit so quietly at home during the war.[15] Had there been no French victory, he says, culture could hardly have survived.[16]

His severity toward German philosophy is scarcely relaxed; of Kant he writes, "...ce que je viens d'écrire est plus obscur que ce qui précède. Aussi sommes-nous entrés en Allemagne..."[17], a remark reminiscent of his earlier discussions of German philosophy. In regard to Nietzsche, who had influenced his own formation, he takes a position less severe than that of the Action Française period, but still fails to reapproach his own youthful enthusiasm for the man.[18]

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[10] Idem, p.162.
[11] Idem, p.163.
[12] M. Georges Duhamel, RU, Dec. 1, 1920.
[13] Idem.
[14] La Chronique du C.G.Q., Idem, Sept. 15, 1920.
[15] Un Roman de moeurs, Idem, Oct. 1, 1920.
[16] M. Georges Duhamel, Idem, Dec. 1, 1920.
[17] La Question de l'art pour l'art, Idem, April 1, 1920.
[18] La Morale de Nietzsche, preface to the edition of 1917.

He feels that for the moment culture and the Mediterranean tradition are safe but that it is imperative to keep Germany under the intellectual domination of the French. Such a domination will be a reagent to Pan-Germanism and thus preclude the possibility of reprisal; Germany must be brought to realise that her plight is to be attributed to her having abandoned the good tradition.

> ...Quand il s'agit de sécurité militaire, de garanties économiques et de réparations, serrons la vis aux Boches. Dans l'ordre des idées et des lettres, jouons la partie largement et sans chétives précautions. C'est la seule manière de gagner.[19]

In this way it will be possible to practice toward Germany a policy of intellectual imperialism, capable of averting further disasters by taking advantage of the conditions created by the defeat.

> Ne saurions-nous donc avoir, conjointement à l'exécution du traité de la paix, une politique, une influence de nature à incliner dans un certain sens les éléments d'instabilité que la défaite a pu engendrer ou réveiller dans la masse germanique?...[20]

And this imperialism is counselled by a belief in the obligation of French civilization toward the world at large.

> Si la France n'est pas en mesure de reprendre sur l'élite pensante de l'Allemagne une profonde influence intellectuelle et morale, nulle nation en Europe ne saurait l'être plus qu'elle. L'esprit de l'Allemagne ne pourra se réformer sans une aide, sans une stimulation du dehors. Toutes les données de l'histoire nous montrent qu'elle ne peut le recevoir que de nous. La pensée universitaire allemande recevra son orientation prochaine ou de Ludendorff ou de la France.[21]

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[19] Comment vaincre la pensée allemande, RU, Nov. 15, 1920.
[20] La Vie nationale, Minerve française, Feb. 1, 1920.
[21] Idem, Idem, January 15, 1920.

This moderate attitude toward defeated Germany contrasts strikingly with the Anti-German agitation of the Action-Française in which Lasserre had formerly participated. A similar contrast between the critic's differing attitudes before and after the war toward Renan is no less remarkable. Both indicate an important revision of his views.

II

Seven months before the start of the great war, when Lasserre began his lecture course on Renan before a genteel, bien-pensant audience assembled by the Revue hebdomadaire, with the announced intention of making the course neither an apology for, or an éreintage of, Renan, there was little in what he said to which either the Action Française or the devotees of the Revue hebdomadaire could normally take exception. Although the article of 1895 which, (he said) won him his trip to Germany, had classified Lasserre with the critics who could write of Renan with detachment, already in 1907 he had ceased to see Renan in more than one light. The chapter on the Idolatry of Progress in the Romantisme français finds that, "...Renan se laisse emporter à des visions et à des rêves tout à fait inacceptables,"[22] and of Renan's writing about progress he permits himself to say:

> Assurément cette sorte si particulière de métaphysique ne comporte aucun commentaire intrinsèque. Elle ne se peut entendre que comme une combinaison purement aventureuse de chimie mentale où se réunissent en proportions diverses les éléments suivants: hallucination du Progrès, fatal et sans termes, tout d'abord; puis prophétisme juif, sensualité d'imagination romantique, volupté qu'une pensée raffinée éprouve à se dissoudre elle-même dans l'océan de l'impensable.[23]

A still more sweeping condemnation appears further on:

[22] Le Romantisme français, p.457.
[23] Idem, p.460.

> ...Mon but, c'est de caractériser en elle-même cette manière de penser et de sentir dont il a fait le prestige et la fortune, et qui était, en tout cas, le coeur de sa philosophie. "L'intuition du devenir dans l'histoire est l'essence de ma philosophie." Nous avons montré comment cette "intuition" pour trouver des objets où s'exercer, oblige l'esprit à se dépouiller les réalités historiques de ce qu'elles ont de plus réel, pour y substituer un songe vaporeux de ces réalités...[24]

The same attitude is apparent when Lasserre appears before the élite assembled by the Revue hebdomadaire. His way of making the Romantic mal du siècle seem the consequence of the fall of the Old Regime has not changed since 1907.[25] Neither has his refutation of the myth of primitive spontaneity, which the Germans had exploited,[26] nor his regarding Renan as a descendant of Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

> ...Et dans cette combinaison de mysticisme et de mécréance, dans ces arrangements de style et d'âme pour goûter ensemble, cumuler et mêler les attraits de la religion et de l'irreligion, je reconnais, pour ma part, un trait de cette universelle concupiscence que le romantisme autorise et même glorifie chez l'individu, une application de ce conseil que l'individu y puise de s'arroger tous les droits, de revendiquer toutes les possessions à la fois...[27]

His dictum on liberalism is in perfect accord with the principles of the Action Française and admirably suited to winning the sympathy of his listeners.

> Deux choses sont vraies du libéralisme: l'une, c'est que l'état de société et de moeurs dont il nourrit le voeu est très satisfaisant en lui-même;

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[24] Idem, p.531.

[25] Cours littéraire sur Renan, Revue hebdomadaire, beginning Jan. 15, 1914.

[26] Idem, p.490.

[27] Idem, I, p.484.

> l'autre, c'est qu'il en méconnaît les conditions réelles et entend le faire reposer sur des institutions et sur des principes publics propres, soit à le ruiner, soit à en empêcher indéfiniment la réalisation. Se telle est la doctrine libérale, on conçoit combien elle favorise peu l'énergie de la pensée...[28]

His audience was doubtless not displeased to hear him say that Renan's beautifully clear intelligence was helpless for lack of the properly motivated collaboration of his heart,[29] or challenge the state's right to harbor in its school system a teacher like Renan, so dangerous to the dominant religion.[30] And if it did not share the feeling of the speaker that for Renan, (who respected the social, political and moral teaching of the Church if not its theological dogma), to be made the ally of those "uniquement animés contre la civilisation à laquelle l'Eglise romaine à présidé," is the height of irony, the case would be strange indeed.[31]

Lasserre defies the critic to stay disinterested in the face of such problems as Renan offers.

> ...nous n'obtiendrons pas non plus de crédit, si, tout en respectant dans nos exposés la vraie figure des évènements, des hommes et des choses, nous ne marquons pas notre position, notre direction dans les grands litiges humains auxquels se ramène tout l'intérêt de l'histoire...L'écrivain qui consacre son étude aux grands éléments de ce conflit, aux forces morales en jeu dans ce balancement de l'humanité, aurait beau vouloir conserver une neutralité de spectateur, d'étranger, il ne le pourra...[32]

Yet he insists upon his right as a critic of literature to include in his study only Renan the writer, without reference to historical or political considerations.[33] He excuses himself from the delivery of a

[28]Idem, I, p.169.
[29]Idem, II, p.325.
[30]Idem, II, p.61.
[31]Idem, I, p.353.
[32]Idem, II, p.451.
[33]Idem, I, p.488.

moral judgment on the man, preferring to conclude that nature had given Renan erudition and literary talent without a corresponding taste for energy and action.[34]

Lasserre is sceptical of the value of discussing Renan's antecedents.

> ...gardons nous d'être plus précis qu'il ne sied dans les questions de race. Elles doivent être soulevés, il ne faut pas s'y avancer trop. Elles touchent à des réalités profondes, mais obscures et mal débrouillées. Dans l'état actuel de nos connaissances, l'intuition y semble plus capable que la science spéciale de saisir les vérités intéressantes...[35]

All the questions to which, in his later Jeunesse de Renan, the critic was to devote such a generous portion of his time are here precisely what he is dismissing.

In the final analysis of the lectures, Lasserre's conclusion is unfavorable to Renan, who, despite his clear intelligence lacked the "élan vers l'action" instinctive in the real lover of truth.[36] Something pronounced was missing from his character.[37] He submitted to the dominance of the contradiction between head and heart.[38] He was at times guilty of a certain "immoralité d'esprit."[39] He permitted himself, "...des latitudes spécieuses que sa pensée s'accordera pour réaliser des conciliations incommodes."[40] His universal sentimentality does not indicate complete possession, but complete evasion.[41] His work contains much from which one may profit, but only at the cost of ultimate dissatisfaction. In sum:

> Aussi ne peut-il être pris comme guide. Ce grand écrivain, cet esprit si brillant ne nous

[34]Idem, I, p.347.
[35]Idem, I, p.157.
[36]Idem, II, p.459.
[37]Idem, I, p.552.
[38]Idem, II, p.450.
[39]Idem, I, p.477.
[40]Idem, I, p.337.
[41]Idem, II, p.452.

offre pas un maître. Je le comparerais à un flacon plein d'essences précieuses mêlées à des essences vénéneuses et qu'on ne doit déboucher qu'avec prudence. Des esprits formés, en possession de leurs principes et de leurs moyens de défense, des coeurs solides et fermes trouverout auprès de lui infiniment à s'instruire et à se plaire, infiniment à s'irriter aussi. Il est dangereux pour la jeunesse et l'inexpérience C'est un grand séducteur de l'intelligence. Ce peut être un défaiseur d'âmes.[42]

Two facts emerge from this analysis: first, that Lasserre sees Renan primarily as a dilettante, as he did in 1907; second, that he is, himself, making no effort to preserve even the exterior appearances of liberalism. Such is the face value of what he says.

Now Lasserre had arranged for these lectures to be printed as a book, but after the type had been set and proofs run off he became so dissatisfied with his work that he indemnified the printer for cancelling the contract and prevented the book's appearance. He had had a change of heart. The treatment of Renan was too hasty and he felt that full justice had not been done.

L'étude de Renan, je l'avais commencée (l'avouerai-je?) un peu à la légère. Une demi-douzaine de conférences destinées à des gens du monde en avait été l'occasion. Devant cet auditoire, je m'apercus bien vite qu'il était préférable de ne pas insister sur les côtés forts du sujet...les grands et redoutables problèmes, problemes, non d'une époque mais de toutes les époques, problémes universels de la vie même de l'humanité, qui évoquent de tout parts les écrits de l'auteur de la Vie de Jésus et de la Réforme intellectuelle et morale., c'est à peine si je les effleurai et les fis entrevoir. Je n'en laissai pas passer l'âpre vent sur un public qui ne l'aurait pas supporté...si j'étais repréhensible, c'étatit plutôt pour n'avoir pas assez prévu

[42]Idem, I, p.475.

l'étroitesse des bornes dans lesquelles ces convenances allaient resserrer ma pensée...

La conclusion que je tirai de cette instructive expérience, fut un honnête--faut-il dire un orgueilleux?--dégout pour toute mutilation de cet opulent et dangereaux sujet: Renan. Il fallait en respecter l'intégrité ou me mettre moi-même, avec cette pleine indépendance de jugement dont beaucoup se vantent, dont il est aisé de se donner les apparences, mais dont l'exercice est très difficile et n'a jamais été plus rare qu'aujourd'hui, en face des immenses questions qui sont le pivot de son oeuvre, comme ils ont été, au moment où il a rompu ses engagements de cléricature pour continuer d'ailleurs à s'occuper de la religion, le pivot de sa destinée. Edulcorer Renan, écrire sur lui en voilant, de part et d'autre, au gré des divers dogmatismes, les brêches que sa critique à pu creuser dans ces dogmatismes, voilà un enfantillage intellectuel que je préférais laisser à de plus accommodants et qui ne peut d'ailleurs être profitable à aucune cause. Mes conférences, superficielles malgré moi, étaient imprimées pour former un livre. Je demandai à l'éditeur la résiliation du traité. Il eut la complaisance d'y consentir. J'eus le devoir de couvrir sa dépense.[43]

Lasserre's Renan et nous, written in 1923, contains this admission of his failure to deal adequately with Renan nine years before. In the interim he had plunged back into the study of Renan and planned a new book, but the labor had been delayed, the centenary of Renan was fast approaching and still no book was finished. What he finally produced for the centenary was not the study of the youth of his man which his magazine articles had presaged, but a smaller outline of the principal elements of the Renan question. This was Renan et nous.

Lasserre discussed in this book less the man than the problem of how the man should be studied in

[43] Renan et nous, p.8.

relation both to his own epoch and to ours, and the proper approach to the multifold interrelations between Renan and his century. There should be, first of all, he says, a competent psychological biography of the man, beginning with the early days at Tréguier and following from Brittany through Saint-Sulpice, to the University, Italy, the Holy Land, and the years at the Collège de France. This should be only the foundation for further work. Renan is no more important, in Lasserre's mind, because he impressed his personality on so many things than for the contribution he made to the fund of knowledge and intelligence of his time.

Renan was a Breton; a Breton is a Frenchman, but one endowed with a temperament, imagination and poetic sensibility which his ordinary compatriot does not possess. The three books which caused the greatest spiritual commotion in nineteenth century France were written by men of Breton blood: le Génie du Christianisme, l'Essai dur l'indifférence, la Vie de Jésus. The Breton character should be examined.

But this Breton was in touch with his century: after he left Tréguier and came to Paris he found inadequate instruction which forced him to deal with an unconvincing hodge-podge of philosophical systems meant to defend a Catholicism unready to withstand his scrutiny. Lasserre proceeds to sketch the progress of Christian ideas from the beginnings down to Renan's youth and then throws himself into the discussion of the ideas which were current in France when Renan left the Church. All these topics must, he is sure, be studied if there is to be a really comprehensive study of Renan.

The very size of the field is appalling. One does not marvel so much that Lasserre could spend ten years in it without finishing a book as one wonders what has become of the impatient ardor of the young man who once disposed of the whole of French Romanticism in one volume. Is this the same Lasserre who in 1914 had had the temerity to condemn Renan in a few brief lectures?

The critic has withdrawn into a more detached life. Study has replaced politics as his chief interest. A cool, appraising attitude has succeeded that of the polemist. Lasserre's years with the Action Française are behind him.

The following has a subjective ring.

> Renan n'a pris à l'égard de l'un ni de l'autre régimes sous lesquels il a vecu, et dont il a été d'ailleurs un haut fonctionnaire, posture d'opposition. Il n'en faut rien conclure en aucun sens, quant au fond de ses idées. Quelles que fussent celles-ci, il a fait ce que doit faire un homme intelligent qui veut travailler en paix, surtout à de hauts travaux, et conserver pour cela, du côté extérieur, cette entière tranquillité d'esprit...hors de laquelle tout ce qui s'appelle littérature, philosophie, critique nait amoindri, fausse, vicié; à moins, cependant, qu'il n'appartienne au genre littéraire de la polemique.[44]

From his own experience Lasserre should have known whereof he was speaking. Political opposition "...prend l'homme tout entier..." and it had so taken him during his collaboration with Maurras. But before Lasserre had engaged in the combat waged by the Action Française, he had written of Renan with his attention no more upon judging the man than on the great currents of ideas at work during the latter's life-time. Now, thirty years later, he returns to his original manner.

> ...Certes, l'histoire de Renan m'attache singulièrement par ellemême. Mais cette histoire est un drame intellectuel et ce drame d'un individu n'eût tant attiré la curiosité de son siècle s'il n'eût été le drame de ce siècle. C'est comme tel, dans sa généralité et son importance impersonnelle que j'ai voulu aussi l'étudier et l'approfondir. Pour cela, il me fallait remonter à ses origines, refaire l'histoire de toutes les idées et les sentiments qu'il met en conflit...[45]

Lasserre's policy of publishing its parts as magazine articles makes the growth of the monumental

[44] Renan et nous, p.222.
[45] Idem, p.237.

Jeunesse clearly visible. On May 13, 1916, a scant two years after the Cours littéraire, the first article appeared in the Revue bleue.[46] Without calculating the time lost in readjustments necessitated by the war, we may figure that: in 1914, the Cours littéraire had to be prepared for the printer, the proofs read, and the decision made to forego publishing; that since he was also teaching, Lasserre had to do his new Renan work in spare time; that he was busy with other writing while he was preparing this first Renan article; that it is very unusual for a magazine to receive a manuscript and publish it immediately; and that, finally, in view of these considerations, Lasserre could have begun his new Renan, at the earliest, toward the end of 1914 and finished it, at the latest, early in 1916. The interval between his forsaking the old attitude and his adopting the new, then, could have been at the longest a matter of a few months.

In the Renan et l'Allemagne, signs of a new approach to the subject are already prominent. Dealing with the years between Renan's literary debut and the publication of the Vie de Jésus, when German ideas were most heavily influencing his development, the essay exposes whatever Germany could offer as satisfaction to a mind which, "...sans consentir au moindre sacrifice du côté de la science, rêve de trouver au sentiment religieux un objet, une base à ses objections, aux objections de l'intelligence..."[47] This involves examining the philosophers with whom Germany had been teeming: Kant, Schleiermacher, the Hegelians, Neo-Hegelians like Renan's friend Strauss. Lasserre's conclusion, that Renan found in Germany only what he was predisposed to find there, and that his knowledge of German philosophy was scarcely proportionate to his high esteem for it, indicates a new method. The critic is trying, apparently, by a process of elimination, to determine what ideas had helped form Renan, and in what way Renan was the expression of the thought of his contemporaries. And in the same article he advances the hypothesis, important because of his refusal to consider such matters two years earlier, that Renan's having been a Breton and not a

[46] Renan et l'Allemagne, RB, May 13, 1916.
[47] Idem, as reprinted in Faust en France, p.69.

Latin may have made him especially hospitable to the German ideas which a Latin mind could not well accept.

A second study, la Seconde crise d'Ernest Renan[48] was finished during the next year. Here, working on the novel Patrice, Lasserre is especially interested in Renan's nihilism, which he believes akin to relativism and indifferentism. He wants explained the contradiction between the Renan of the Patrice, whose devotion to criticism has robbed him of the force of will necessary to action, and the Renan who worked valiantly all his life, cheerfully married an attractive woman, and died a celebrated public figure. This demands, he suspects, a psychological study of Renan. "Il y avait erreur...à expliquer le choix de cette philosophie par de pures raisons spéculatives et à n'en pas demander compte à la nature de Renan."[49] Moreover, he suggests again that light may be thrown on the problem by an examination of Renan's racial heritage.[50] The lines on which his Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan will be built are not here entirely, but some of them are apparent.

These two essays, themselves, were not included in the larger work, for a change of plans regarding the scope of the latter forced Lasserre to reduce its magnitude. Ernest Renan, sa vie, son oeuvre, son époque, 3 vols., announced for publication in 1921,[51] never appeared.

> Ayant commencé ce vaste ouvrage, j'en ai changé, en cours d'exécution, le dessein et le plan. Je voulais retracer la biographie d'un esprit. Je me suis bientôt aperçu que ce que je trouvais de plus intéressant dans cette biographie, c'est le chapitre d'histoire générale des idées qu'elle contenait...[52]

Other essays which followed these were retained. In 1919 the Revue bleue published two articles under the

[48]MF, 1915—111, p.625.
[49]Idem, p.69.
[50]Idem, p.71.
[51]Les Chapelles littéraires, preliminary leaf.
[52]Faust en France, p.iii.

common title of La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, which comprise, with few and minor changes, pages 121-157 of the first volume of the book. In them his method and the purpose of its use are already clearly defined.[53]

The method is clearly psychological, in the way that Sainte-Beuve's method is psychological in the Port-Royal; the critic's efforts are bent toward replacing the subject in its psychological cadre, by a literary restoration of Tréguier, the Renan family in the miserable years following the drowning of the father, the heroism of the mother and the sister Henriette, the relations between mother and son, the school masters-priests who began Renan's education. Rarely is Renan himself the direct subject of discussion; the Correspondance and the Souvenirs are often invoked, but for the purpose of letting the reader see the surroundings through Renan's eyes.

One of Lasserre's earlier judgments appears to have been altered while he was preparing these articles. In 1914 he had condemned Renan for his characteristic wariness of solutions to the problems which confronted him, his repeated evasions of final answers on the ground that one was, most likely, as true as another; this, Lasserre had felt, was one of the things which made Renan a "défaiseur d'âmes." In 1917 he was puzzled by the condition of Renan's mind which was at once paralysed in regard to action and capable of industry, love, and other things of which ability to act is a requisite.

Now, two years later, we find him passing over this characteristic duality with no more of a judgment than:--

> ...Faculté séduisante et dangereuse que cette variété de résonances, cette multiple polarité morale, et dont il pourrait plus tard arriver qu'Ernest Renan abusât un peu à dessein. En ce moment, en cette saison de fraîcheur première, elle s'exerce au service des meilleurs des sentiments: affection filiale, reconnaissance pour ses bienfaiteurs, et ses maîtres...[54]

[53] La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, RB, May 3, 1919; and following.
[54] La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, I, p.148. This part written in 1919.

Moreover, he even defends Renan:

> Ce qu'on reprochait à Renan, c'était son attitude de détachement universel; c'était qu'ayant consacré ses efforts à étudier l'humanité dans toutes ses manifestations morales, il eût pris à son égard la position d'un pur contemplateur, dédaigneusement étranger au fond et à la vie même de ce qu'il contemple, et ne se proposant d'autre satisfaction, d'autre résultat que d'en divertir son intelligence et d'en rendre le spectacle avec art. On flétrissait cette disposition supposée du nom insidieux de dilettantisme qui signifiait une espèce de sybaritisme de la pensée...[55]

This same, extremely critical attitude toward human nature which made Renan dislike to take a side in any dispute is involved both in the dilettantism of which Lasserre believes him unjustly accused and in the strange contradiction in his nature which the critic has previously affirmed. Lasserre feels now that the charge of dilettantism puts all the emphasis on one side of the problem. He cannot, he confesses, imagine a man who would climb Mount Blanc simply to settle his dinner, and even less one who would devote his whole life to exhaustive works of history and criticism without having some faith in the real value of the human mind. That the man talked much of the enjoyment he derived from his work, and little of its hardships, Lasserre attributes to exquisite taste and tact. Furthermore, the pessimism which Renan's critics call a vice has been thought a virtue when found in other writers.

> Il était vraiment trop commode de relever dans un oeuvre comme celle-là une infinité de traits et de maximes qui, séparés de tout ce qui leur sert de correctif, semblent bien contenir cette leçon d'apathie générale, de transcendante indolence, de découragement distingué qu'on lui reprochait de répandre. Renan a dit sur la position de l'homme dans l'univers, sur la prodigieuse

[55] Les Chapelles littéraires, p.154.

> part d'incohérence et de déraison qui se fait sentir dans les arrangements et la destinée de l'humanité, tout ce qui peut servir d'argument aux thèses du pessimisme et du fatalisme. Mais quel écrivain a jamais pensé avec un peu de force et d'étendue sans en dire et en voir autant. Et pourquoi ce même fond d'observations désolantes, qu'on rapporte, quand c'est un Montaigne, un Pascal, un Bossuet, un Voltaire qui nous le propose, au noble besoin d'éclairer le genre humain sur les terribles difficultés de la route qu'il poursuit, devait-il être interprété, de la part de leur moderne successeur quant à la grandeur de l'esprit, comme une invitation délétère à s'asseoir ou à se coucher au bord du chemin pour regarder, avec un désintéressement ironique, les passants en proie de l'éternelle illusion?[56]

Lasserre's conclusion is peremptory. What scandalizes these adverse critics is Renan's remarkable, expansive intelligence. "...Le dilettantisme n'était pas autre chose qu'un nom péjoratif et diffamatoire donné à ces lumineuses vertus de l'esprit..."[57] Such a refutation of the detractors of Renan, relative to a subject which has previously puzzled Lasserre himself, indicates a new lack of hostility in Lasserre's attitude.

Two more Renan articles were published in 1922, Renan au Séminaire[58] and Renan à Saint-Sulpice.[59] These were reprinted as pages 163-307 of the Jeunesse. The part concerning the stay at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet is exceptionally long. This school was the creation of one man, l'Abbé Dupanloup, who had previously succeeded in making his catechism classes at the Madeleine so attractive to the catacumenes that other catechists, attributing his success to his personality, had prevailed upon the diocesan authorities to transfer him to a post a bit further from the limelight. The same

[56] Idem, p.157.
[57] Idem, p.160.
[58] Renan au Séminaire, Revue de Paris, Oct. 15-Nov. 1, 1922.
[59] Renan à Saint-Sulpice, MF, Nov. 15, 1922.

Dupanloup, subsequently, negotiated Talleyrand's reconciliation with the Church, although only after the renegade had made it perfectly clear that the initiative was his only in small measure and that the Church was extremely anxious to press the matter to a conclusion. Twenty pages are devoted to this story, "...dont je n'ai parlé que pour les clartés qu'elle projette sur le caractère et l'esprit de l'Abbé Dupanloup."[60] Dupanloup's elation over the success of his effort was, according to Lasserre, incommensurate with the dimensions of the event.

> ...le pathétique religieux de cette scène, c'est l'Abbé Dupanloup qui l'y a mis de toutes pièces. Il y a de quoi être touché de sa candide confiance. Mais n'y a-t-il pas ainsi (je le demande au simple point de vue de la vérité psychologique qui seul me préoccupe là) de quoi avoir la cervelle un peu irritée de son aveuglement? S'étant engagé dans cette affaire avec la plus vive ardeur, il a pris cette ardeur pour la mesure de son succès.[61]

Brilliant, popular, inspired, but uncritical and rather superficial, Dupanloup wielded unlimited power at Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, and over the young Renan. This fashionable institution, which aimed to produce the great men, lay and ecclesiastic, of the future, lacked the sobriety of the seminary at Tréguier, and left the youth first bewildered and then critical. Here ensued "...cette première crise intellectuelle qui a laissé intacte la foi religieuse, non sans en ronger quelque peu les abords, (qui) est la préparation et comme l'annonce de la grande crise où la foi s'abîmera."[62] And the awakening historical sense of the young man here began to discomfit him.

But it was at Issy, where, without brilliance, the austere Sulpicians had set themselves to the unostentatious task of educating future priests, that the

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[60]Idem, p.208, note.
[61]Idem, p.209.
[62]La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, I, p.248.

real revolt took place. To describe Issy and to show how Renan fitted into the tableau--these are the aims of the second article. It makes the shortest chapter of the book but it is not an entity; it is a preparation for the chapter soon to follow which will treat of the ideas Renan met at Issy and will fill two whole volumes of the Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan.

The problem of Renan's heredity, outlined in the earlier articles is treated in the first 117 pages of the book. Lasserre had lived in Brittany and read the books of Charles Le Goffic, in which he could confirm his personal observations[63]; he had made extensive researches into the writers of Breton-French blood, and from them arrived at the hypothesis that the âme bretonne is more than an abstraction and that Renan's particular mental make-up may be reduced to terms of race psychology.

He found certain characteristics which distinguish the Breton from the Latin--on one side a marked and almost invincible tenacity of purpose which satisfies itself or perishes in the undertaking of stupendous enterprises, coupled with a tendency to rebel violently against exterior restraints; on the other, a poet's inability to distinguish between the real and the unreal, the practical and the impractical or superpractical. The first flowering of Breton genius, he points out, came in the Middle Ages before Latin intellectual domination had imposed on Breton poetry a silence which was to last five centuries; the second came only when the Latin domination was broken by the outburst of the Romantic movement. The sudden reappearance of the Breton element in French literature after so long an interval, is, Lasserre asserts, significant because of the proof it affords that the Breton is incompatible with the Latin genius. Consequently, their moment was extremely favorable to Chateaubriand, Lamennais and Renan, the three great rebels of the nineteenth century, all of whom originated in Brittany. Much of Renan's uneasiness in the presence of dogma and system--particularly the dogma and system of the Latin church--his paradoxical

[63]Idem, p.318.

mixtures of intellectual earnestness and ironic raillery, of sensitive imagination and pedestrian common sense, of nihilism and industry, seems to Lasserre a heritage from Breton ancestors. This chapter completes Volume I of the Jeunesse.

The second volume, appearing within a few months after the first, is a history of philosophy, sub-titled le Drame de la Métaphysique chrétienne.[64] Lasserre had written at the end of the first book:

> A peine livré à la liberté des études supérieures, cet avide esprit s'est emparé d'une masse de notions, d'observations, d'expériences nouvelles que les acquisitions de la philosophie, de l'histoire et de la critique avaient accumulées dans l'atmosphère de son époque. Il en a audacieusement et comme d'un trait dégagé les conséquences. Il a déchiré les voiles qui dérobaient à la timidité de des compagnons, de ses maîtres, de beaucoup de gens du dehors, ces nouvelles données. Il a regardé en face les profondes et redoutables difficultés qu'elles créaient surement, les horizons d'espérance qu'elles ouvraient peutêtre à l'avenir religieux et morale de l'humanité moderne. Impossible de reconter son siècle sans le raconter. Impossible de la raconter sans raconter son siècle.[65]

The story opens with the inception of Christianity and the marriage of Christian cosmogony with Greek habits of thought. Hence Lasserre traces its progress through Alexandria, Rome and medieval Europe to the modern era and Renan's time. The whole book is given over to the patient exposition of Christian ideas; only at the end does the reader realize that he has been following a long digression which at length brings him back to Renan again.

It is patent that we are no longer dealing with the author of the Romantisme français. In 1907 the

[64]Our treatment of this book attempts in no way to assay Lasserre's competence as a metaphysician.

[65]La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, I, p.370.

method used by Lasserre made every page a judgment. Now, when an occasional judgment does intrude, it serves less to dispose of a question than to clear the way for the narrative. In 1923, when asked whether he liked Renan, Lasserre replied:

> Le question me met à la gène. C'est comme si l'on me demandait si j'aime le Rhône ou la Loire. Qu'est-ce que cela peut faire? Ce sont deux grandes fleuves. Le rôle qu'ils ont joué dans l'histoire, l'influence qu'ils ont eue et auront encore sur les établissements économiques et commerciaux de notre nation sont de plus importants sujets de curiosité que l'agrément que je puisse trouver à leurs bords.[66]

Despite the feebleness of the analogy, Lasserre's attachment to the subject was evident. Jacques Maritain, leader of the Thomist group of philosphers, read the second volume of the Jeunesse and decided that the critic liked his subject all too well.

To Lasserre the success of Christianity is a matter of its having appeared at an opportune time.

> ...Au milieu du grand mélange de peuples et de races qui s'était produit, il ne pouvait y avoir de viable, dans le domaine religieux, qu'une combinaison doctrinale de ce genre. A preuve, le rapetissement et l'avilissement réservés, à partir de la, aux idées juives et aux idées grecques poursuivant des destins séparés...[67]

He insists that there has been an evolution in Christian dogma and theology. "Cette foi n'a pas été, ni pu être, dès sa naissance, ce qu'elle est aujourd'hui dans les formules et commandements de l'Eglise.[68] Consistently enough, he views the fortune of Church philosophy with an historian's eye.

Greek metaphysics had been built on a basis of Greek physics and the Greeks had lacked a means of ascertaining the nature of the more complicated physical

[66] Faust en France, p.73.
[67] La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, II, p.109.
[68] Idem, p.126.

phenomena. With the discovery of analytical apparatus the Medieval realists, who had inherited the Greek philosophical tradition, were placed in a position increasingly difficult to hold. The mastery of each new physical fact made the importance of universals less impressive and increased that of the phenomenon. Even before the thirteenth century, Peter Abelard and his followers had so obviously looked askance at Graeco-Christian idealism that the Church had been forced to take them seriously to task. Saint Thomas himself arrested the movement toward nominalism only temporarily, and as one physical discovery followed another the weight of his prestige was eventually overcome. Descartes marked the end of Medieval philosophy for reasons which belong to the inevitable logic of history. The physics of the Greeks had been so completely mined away by generations of investigators that the only tenable position of later adherents of Thomism was to claim that metaphysics are independent of physics and that discoveries in the second do not affect the first.

However, (and here Lasserre is no longer interpreting the history of ideas but voicing what is certainly a personal opinion):-

> Ce beau raisonnement, qui est celui de nos scholastiques modernes, quand on leur objecte la science moderne, et auquel je ne conteste pas d'ailleurs toute part de justesse, a malheureusement contre lui le fait. Cette morale des formes, des archétypes, des essences, des substances tel que le dessine la métaphysique gréco-latine, doit avoir avec le monde physique, qui est censé se modeler sur lui, une correspondance, une symétrie, qui soit comme la garantie concrête et la contre-épreuve tangible de sa vérité. Or, cette correspondance, cette symétrie s'il l'a bien, en effet, avec le monde physique connu, ou imaginé des Grecs et du moyen âge, il ne l'a pas du tout avec le monde physique, tel que la science expérimentale nous l'a fait connaître depuis quatre siècles ...A la vérité, le monde idéal d'un Platon ou d'un Saint Thomas n'est que l'idéalisation de la nature

que leurs yeux et un médiocre ensemble de renseignements leur représentaient.[69]

Lasserre regards quite definitely the abandonment of philosophy as one part of a general movement, caused by the advance of human knowledge, which weakened at the same time the philosophy of the Church and the dogma which the system had been designed to support. This is the polar opposite of the view taken by apologists, official and unofficial, of the Church; nothing could be further from the minds of these latter than that knowledge of the physical world could necessitate the restatement of a dogma, which, by their definition, is eternal. Small wonder then that his Thomist contemporaries looked on Lasserre's book with a bilious eye! Maritain's dismissal was categorical: Lasserre's religious philosophy is "sans doute d'une honnête inspiration morale, mais d'une qualité intellectuelle des plus médiocres...elle méconnaît autant les assises rationnellement établies que l'object divinement révélé de la foi..."[70] Lasserre was, to the leader of the Thomists, making an aspect of religion conform to human progress and thus, in a way, making an apology for Renan.

In the second volume of the Jeunesse, also, Lasserre classes himself among those on the periphery of metaphysical agnosticism:

> En somme, des deux thèses, la pessimiste et l'optimiste, celle-ci est la mieux plaidable. Oh! Elle n'est pas écrasante! Ne nous fions à aucune démonstration pour la rendre irrésistible. Si haut que s'élève l'accumulation des faits pour, celle des faits contre ne laisse pas de la serrer de près. A s'en tenir aux faits, la thèse de la finalité, de l'ordre et du bien universels ne gagnerait jamais que de peu de points. Encore un honnête homme se sent-il bien lâche pour la défendre contre un malheureux qui accuse la vie. Le litige courrait grand risque de s'éterniser, sans l'appoint d'un facteur personnel, intérieur, qui

[69]Idem, p.274.

[70]Polémique autour de Renan, Réponse à M. Pierre Lasserre, NL, Aug. 15, 1925.

> ajoute son poids à celui des réalités d'où ne ressort en faveur du bien qu'un témoinage trop faible ou trop discutable...[71]

This leads to another question. We know that Lasserre has, while defending Renan in the Jeunesse from a similar charge of metaphysical agnosticism, asserted that this has been the condition of many active and honorable men before Renan who have not had to answer for it as synonymous with a hands-in-pockets philosophy. To what extent, we may ask, was Renan's influence responsible for Lasserre's own similar agnosticism or near agnosticism? To what extent was he, in general, under the influence of Renan at this time? The undeniable changes in Lasserre's Weltanschauung between 1914 and 1924 have inspired at least one critic to assume that they were effected mainly through Renan's sway over him. Maurice Halperin speaks of Renan as a "revivifying wind"--presumably carrying Lasserre toward liberalism.[72] Maurice Martin du Gard believes rather that Lasserre's transformation resulted from his disgust at the exaggerated illiberalism of a number of his compatriots during the World War.[73] Fortunately, neither of these hypotheses excludes the other. It even seems likely that the reaction described by M. du Gard supplemented the influence of Renan in liberalizing Lasserre. One might even doubt that Renan, alone, could have achieved the result.

For, granted that at some time during the decade in question, Renan succeeded Maurras as presiding genius over Lasserre's intellectual life, it is not at all certain that the exchange was so stupendous, nor the gulf between the two mentors so great as it first appears. On the exterior, their separation is antipodal: Renan is the personification of the liberalism of his time, whereas Maurras represents the extreme pole of the illiberal. But subcutaneously the two resemble each other in numerous respects. Renan, at least the mature and disillusioned Renan of the Réforme intellectuelle et

[71] La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, p.285.
[72] Pierre Lasserre as a liberal, PMLA, Dec. 1934.
[73] La Mort d'un clerc, NL, Dec. 13, 1930.

morale, has many political theories which Maurras approves and even occasionally borrows; they are bastions of political conservatism. Both men have the same taste for sobriety and labor in the mechanical business of living; the author of the Avenir de la science and the author of the Avenir de l'intelligence are equally industrious. Each has his origins in the positivism of the nineteenth century and if the manifestations are different, the source is fundamentally the same. They share an immense interest in classical antiquity and while it is true that it took the war of 1870 to make Renan see the Germans as Maurras has seen them all his life, it is equally true that Renan came finally to a view somewhat similar to that of Maurras. Renan disliked systems more than Maurras, but it is nevertheless to be noted that Maurras himself never attempted any such systemization as Lasserre attempted for him in the Romantisme français. In sum, the principal difference between Maurras and Renan is one of temperament. Renan cannot abide doctrine and Maurras cannot dispense with it; Renan flees dogmas and Maurras promulgates them:--which is perhaps another way of saying that Maurras is an aggressive personality and Renan an unagressive one. Certainly the transition from the influence of the one to that of the other is not such a radical departure as the abrupt opposition of the names Maurras and Renan would incline one to suppose.

III

Furthermore, although it is undeniable that by the publication of the Jeunesse, in 1925, Lasserre has abandoned the position he had held when he wrote the Romantisme français, there is no complete justification for the opinion that Lasserre's Renan studies have led him to revise his opinion regarding the nineteenth century. M. Benjamin Crémieux is perfectly safe in saying that "...M. Lasserre répudie décidément sa thèse de 1907, et celle de ses amis ou anciens amis de l'Action française: il se refuse à ne voir qu'influence etrangère dans le Romantisme..."[74]

[74]Review of the Jeunesse, NL, March 21, 1925.

M. Crémieux may affirm this providing he remembers always that Lasserre's belief was less that Romanticism was of foreign origin than that it was Anti-French, which is a different proposition. In any event Lasserre's tone is much milder in his references to such Romantics as "...le Celte au langage magnifiquement séducteur, à l'âme étrangère et lointaine, qui était venu, dans le Génie du Christianisme, rafraîchir, par les tableaux et les images, et sans s'inquiéter du dogme lui-même, le sentiment religieux des Français."[75] Yet in the preface to the 1919 edition of the Romantisme français, though he admits that his enthusiasm of 1907 gave him too much violence of expression, he no less continues to sustain the validity of his doctrines[76] and even argues that events in the intervening years have confirmed the value of his thesis.[77] Nothing makes him doubt that the Romantisme français marked an inevitable stage of the reaction against Romanticism. "...Ce livre était attendu; il etait écrit dans bien des esprits avant de naître."[78]

> ...Il était nécessaire que les coeurs qui s'étaient enivrés de romantisme connussent à la tristesse et à la mélancolie de leurs servitudes le mensonge dont il les avait séduite. Il était nécessaire que les poètes eussent éprouvé combien, après un premier jet de lyrisme incandescent, mais peu inspiré de la nature, il tarissait les sources humaines de la poésie et épuisait le sève des arts. Il était nécessaire que les malheurs de la patrie eussent préparé à comprendre la folie d'une politique qu'il conseille.[79]

He continues to advocate a classical discipline which, far from trammeling the imagination, supports it as the gardener's frame supports the growing plant.

> En marquant le véritable objet de la discipline classique, qui seule implique le respect des formes de la nature humaine et le souci de leur

[75] La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, I, p.179.
[76] le Romantisme français, p.i.
[77] Idem, p.xviii.
[78] Idem, p.xviii.
[79] Idem, p.xvii.

> fécondité, j'indique à l'aide de quel sophisme (sophisme favorisé par le désordre des temps et les perturbations de la vie nationale) Ce romantisme abusa pendant un siècle une grande partie de l'élite française...[80]

This is in 1919. In 1922 a shift in emphasis is visible. Where, a decade before, Lasserre was interested in drawing attention to the number of writers included by his definition of Romanticism, he is now occupied with showing how many his definition really excludes, and where, three years before, he had been reiterating his old formulae regarding the nineteenth century, he is now pointing out that he never condemned the century as a whole, but only one movement within it, and that his severity had not touched many authors. He refuses to call the century stupid, with Daudet, and demands that nothing be judged en bloc, asserting that he observed this rule in writing the Romantisme français! "...Je ne m'étais pas attaqué à l'ensemble de la littérature dite romantique, ni à l'ensemble des poètes qu'on a coutume d'y rattacher..."[81] But it is to be noted that at the same time he is still looking for a rejuvenation of French literature not from Romanticism, but from a rebirth of the classic spirit.

> ...Si un contact retrouvé avec les hautes sources littéraires et philosophiques est indespensable, pour ramener l'onde de vie au coeur de ces nouveaux venus couvés sur le sable du désert, ce n'est pas chez les maîtres romantiques qu'ils retrouveront ces eaux régénératrices...[82]

This shifting of emphasis is certainly important. It indicates at least a moving away from the old position, but, as the preceding citations show, it is not complete and not at all a "repudiation" as M. Crémieux suggests. Indeed, there will never be a full repudiation. What we are here viewing is a by no means even full transition. It is as transition documents that we

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[80] Idem, p.xvi.
[81] Pour et contre le XIXe siècle, Opinion, May 27, 1922.
[82] Idem.

must consider the two large works of purely literary criticism written by Lasserre during this period.

The inspiration of Lasserre's third crusade must, as Albert Thibaudet has said,[83] be a vestige of the critic's familiar Anti-Romanticism. Two books, Frédéric Mistral, poète, moraliste, citoyen, 1919, and les Chapelles littéraires, 1921[84] in which this crusade is summed up, are from one point of view companion volumes to the Romantisme français. From another, they represent the position of Lasserre at the moment when he is exchanging certain old ideas for new ones.

> ...Le sens du parfait dans les lettres et les arts a subi un grand fléchissement. A la vérité, il est en train de disparaître. On ne le rencontre plus que chez une rare élite, dispersée, impuissante, sans influence sur le jugement public et appartenant en général aux plus anciennes générations françaises vivantes...[85]

Toward Romanticism, the literary phenomenon itself, Lasserre is no more favorable than in 1907, but he has ceased to think merely in terms of Romantic and Non-Romantic and begun to think in terms of building up the perishing élite, of making it less rare and a more active force in literature. Under the names of Romanticism, Symbolism, Naturalism and Impressionism the literary schools of the years since 1830, while bringing to literature certain revivifying elements, have, in his view, caused literature to abandon the laws which previously governed its life. These were pushed aside as if they had been imposed by an exterior authority. "... Il ne voyaient plus que la faculté de les mettre en oeuvre se confond avec le développement du génie lui-même, qui est nature et culture à la fois."[86] Romanticism released art from the inhibitions of truth-telling,

[83] A. Thibaudet, Réflexions, N.R.F., Feb. 1, 1933.
[84] First printed as articles in the Minerve française, Aug. 1, 1919-Oct. 15, 1920.
[85] F. Mistral..., p.256.
[86] Idem, p.258.

naturalness and sobriety--and left art hollow. The other schools ruined synthesis and structure and robbed art of the substance of sentiment itself.[87] At the end of this concatenation, Lasserre finds the condition against which he launches his campaign.

> Je ne dis pas que ces reproches atteignent (et tant s'en faut!) tout ce qu'ont produit les poètes et les artistes que leurs déclarations ou leurs attaches ont fait ranger sous les étiquettes de ces écoles. J'en ai aux principes. Mais les principes ont eu d'immenses effets. Leur action, progressant à travers tout un siècle, nous a finalement donné le mal dont nous pâtissons le plus aujourd'hui, une littérature et un art de chapelles. La chapelle est l'aboutissement de l'école, le cul-de-sac où elle finit par verser et expirer; la chapelle, lieu d'idolâtrie où s'entretient le culte, non de ce qui est médiocre, mais de ce qui est incomplet et avorté, où les valeurs se jugent et les admirations se décident à de sombres points de vue de fanatisme et du lubie, tout à fait étrangers au plaisir, où les esprits se gâtent à ce point que ce qui est heureux, réussi, epanoui, agréable, leur cause une espèce de scandale et qu'ils croient que c'est cela qui est manqué et dont il faut faire fi...[88]

Here Romanticism is still under discussion, but Romanticism which is not political, social, or cosmic, and which approaches a purely aesthetic phenomenon. Taste has been weakened by it and must be restored.

Lasserre's illustration of a poet in good taste is Mistral, for whom his admiration is not new since he has liked the Provencal's poems at least since the days with the Action Française.[89] He has met the old man and one of his few ventures into criticism during the war

[87] Idem, p.259.
[88] Idem, p.260.
[89] Idem, p.194.

period has been an appreciation of Mistral's work.[90] To the list once published in the Romantisme français--Homer, Virgil and Goethe--he now adds Mistral, as another poet possessing the qualifications of classical breadth and serenity, the faculty for uncapricious love, the ability to reflect all the beauty of God's handiwork.[91] Mistral is another proof that inspiration and artistic competence are not incompatible.

The critic has relinquished none of his old distaste for the theory of spontaneous genius. Mistral's poetry, written when ideas from Germany fostered the feeling that one could write good poetry without knowing anything, proves to Lasserre the falsity of those ideas. According to Lasserre, the same movement of Nationalism which led the Germans to exalt the value of the primitive, led Mistral to the other extreme by putting him in touch with his cultural birthright and making him delve deep into the folkways and history of his own people, who were not primitives but a highly civilized line which political influences had forced into century-long obscurity; before he could write Provencal poetry, Mistral had first to resuscitate Provencal culture, a task requiring preparation and even erudition. Thus Lasserre objects heartily to Lamartine's feeling that in Mistral he had to do with an untutored peasant genius. Mistral seems to Lasserre neither a spontaneous genius nor an exponent of neat but uninspired poetry.[92]

Moreover, Mistral's unromantic, Latin poetry contains something which other poetry cannot offer to a distressed nation.

> ...A l'heure présente, les âmes françaises ont d'autres besoins. Elles ont besoin qu'à cette douce influence du beau se mêle un secours spirituel plus précis et plus approprié. Depuis quatre ans, elles acceptent d'affreuses douleurs. Tout ce qui peut faire resplendir à leurs yeux la nécessité, la valeur absolue des biens pour le salut desquels elles paient ce terrible prix,

[90] L'Oeuvre de F. Mistral, Revue hebdomadaire, Dec. 1917,-Jan. 1918.
[91] Le Romantisme français, p.174; F. Mistral..., p.78.
[92] Idem, p.25.

> soutient leur force de résistance et leur énergie de résolution...Il est donc naturel de rechercher de préférence, parmi les maîtres de l'esprit ceux qui contiennent la source de ce reconfort, ceux qui ont eu la pensée et le coeur assez grands pour donner avec autorité de telles leçons...Or, Mistral est l'un d'eux et le plus récent...[93]

Mistral's virgilian patriotism animates his verse and is available to anyone. His is the opposite of the poetry of the chapelle, which can be read and discussed only entre littérateurs. Here once more, Lasserre is linking what, to his mind, is classical with the tradition of the French nation.

Lasserre's presentation is arranged for those who, because of their ignorance of the semi-foreign language, have put off reading the poems. After the opening chapters, the book restates the narratives and explains the esoteric references and beauties of Calendal, Nerte, Mireille and the Poème du Rhône.

What Lasserre is presenting to the public in his Mistral is a model upon which the taste of the time could be corrected, one as remote as possible from the Neo-Romanticism of the poetry of the chapelles. Mistral is classical and national, both of which are virtues of the sort advocated by the critic in the Action Française era; Mistral is also a Regionalist and opposed to centralization, as were Lasserre and Maurras while their fortunes were cast together. To this extent the book looks backward to 1908. In the continuation of this crusade against the Chapelles, we see that Lasserre is also looking forward.

As early as 1913, Lasserre had judged the chapelles with considerable severity in one of his articles for the Action Française. Of Claudel, Jammes and Péguy he then wrote:--

> ...Ces trois auteurs sont des tempéraments, des imaginations, des sensibilités très intéressantes, des personnalités nobles douées d'une certaine génialité. Je suis tout disposé à leur rendre, et

[93]Idem, p.14.

> mieux que je ne l'ai fait jusqu'ici, toute justice. Mais ils sont pleins de barbaries dans la conception, de difformités et d'impuissances dans l'exécution qui interdisent absolument, n'en déplaise aux chapelles, de les appeler des "maîtres", sous peine d'une monstreuse injustice à l'égard de tous les grands auteurs français qui ont mérité ce titre...Il faut n'avoir jamais naïvement senti le beau pour leur faire ce sort.[94]

Between 1913 and 1918, Lasserre has evidently become aware of their increasing influence over the élite. This is the work of--

> ...une sorte de parti conjuré, de garde de zélotes ou de mamelucks littéraires qui s'est formée autour de certains auteurs d'aujourd'hui, au premier rang desquels Paul Claudel, le plus fanatiquement servi par ces pourvoyeurs de renommée. Le côté fâcheux de ces dévouements, dont on peut bien reconnaître la générosité et la noblesse de mobiles, tout en signalant les excès, c'est qu'ils se refusent à toute distinction de mérite et de valeur dans les inspirations du maître qu'ils prônent; c'est qu'ils repoussent, méprisent et flétrissent d'avance toute réserve critique le concernant, comme une preuve d'intelligence ou de mauvais coeur, qu'ils apportent enfin dans leur culte plutôt la sombre et rebutante tension du sectaire que ce sentiment sympathique et communicatif, qui denote l'action persuasive du vrai et du beau sincèrement éprouvés.[95]

The adjectives which Lasserre opposes to each other in this definition, "sombre et rebutante, Sympathique et communicatif, persuasif", betray his attitude; he is still appealing to others than the purely aesthetic sentiments of the reader; he still feels that the critic's function is essentially didactic. It is, Lasserre reasons, impossible for the artist himself to be

[94] La Jeunesse contemporaine d'après Agathon, AF, March 23, 1915.
[95] Les Chapelles littéraires, p.x.

affected by criticism, but it is at least possible to influence future artists. The poetry of another generation may well profit by the endeavor of the critics to "...façonner aux poètes et aux artistes de demain un public dont l'âme soit assez libérale, l'intelligence assez ouverte, le sentiment assez noble et le goût assez sain pour que, trouvant ce public à leur hauteur, ils reconquièrent l'instinct de travailler pour lui."[96] Thus once more he capitulates his "antique et contemporain" theory. In art and literature, more than in other domains, the new is essential, but there is no virtue in newness alone. "...Sa manifestation, ou plutôt sa réalisation n'est pas possible que dans un cadre qui lui préexiste et qu'elle modifie en le traversant, qu'elle enrichit de ce qu'elle a de perfection propre, mais sans en altérer l'ordre essentiel. Ce cadre s'appelle tradition..."[97]

Charles Péguy, Francis Jammes and Paul Claudel are victims of the disregard of tradition of their contemporaries.

> ...Ce tort ne consiste pas seulement à faire du cyclopéen Paul Claudel un génie sans égal de la famille de Dante et d'Eschyle et les dépassant; il consiste à ôter de la vue du public ce qu'il y a eu de vraiment supérieur et de grand chez Charles Péguy, le pamphlétaire, l'homme d'indignation, de fureur, d'invective, de bravoure, de corps à corps avec les individus, le mémorialiste et l'autobiographe de si forte et savoureuse humeur, enfin le lyrique admirable de <u>la Tapisserie de Notre-Dame</u>, pour mettre en vedette ses grosses et malheureuses entreprises épiques, sa Jeanne d'Arc presque illisible, résultat d'une profonde erreur littéraire, ou bien l'idéologie si mal venue de ses essais de métaphysique, de critique et de philosophie de l'histoire; il consiste à placer sur le même plan et à célébrer d'une haleine le fruits d'une poésie toute fraîche et neuve que Francis Jammes gardera l'enviable

[96]Idem, p.xxxviii.
[97]Idem, p.xxx.

> gloire d'avoir ajoutee au patrimoine de la littérature française et les astucieuses faiblesses que le même Jammes se laisse aller à écrire, quand il sort de sa veine naturelle...[98]

Claudel's work, Lasserre complains, too often flouts the intelligence of his reader. What has always been great poetry has been accessible to the audience; neither Homer nor Sophocles, nor Racine, nor Lamartine, nor even Victor Hugo was a difficult author.[99] Claudel is rarely a poet and rarely French; all sense of proportion is lacking in his work, in which phrase is piled on phrase, idea on idea, in a manner less Gallic than Oriental. Unable to abide by the conventions of the French language, the poet gives way to fustian, oversolemnity, grandiloquence, brutality, false naiveté and false simplicity, which spoil the excellent parts of his poetry and deprive Lasserre of all pleasure in reading him. And, adds the critic, if the Holy Ghost itself should take to speaking French, there would be Frenchmen to request it, as far as possible, to respect and refrain from mangling the language.[100]

Lasserre finds equally glaring faults in Claudel's technique. The discontinuous rhythms of the poems seem to him oftener absent than present. Often the verses exist only for the eye. Certainly, he admits, this does not make them prose, but neither does it make them poetry.[101]

In short, sense, language and technique leave Lasserre equally unsatisfied and disposed to consider Claudel's work as a collection of fine fragments lying in an imposing pile of debris. For this, Rimbaud and the Symbolists, under whose influence Claudel grew up, are held responsible, since they repudiated the essential laws of French expression and held French literature in small esteem.[102] This may excuse Claudel, but it effectively bars all hope of assimilating in the literary patrimony of the future the body of his work. "...Ma conclusion commence à la première ligne de cet

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[98] Les Chapelles littéraires, p.xi.
[99] Idem, p.37.
[100] Idem, p.54.
[101] Idem, p.65.
[102] Idem, p.65.

article et se poursuit sur tout son étendue..."[103]

Like Claudel, Francis Jammes had grown up under the influences of the late nineteenth century and came naturally by his belief that literary excellence is a matter of novelty and individualism. Often "...il ne paraît pas avoir vu que la véritable force poétique se manifeste dans la personnalité et la splendeur qu'un poète inspiré, supérieur au troupeau des humains, mais non pas singulier parmi eux, restitue au lieu commun. ..,"[104] and his work suffers in consequence. In his very earliest poems he transforms life to fit his personality, and makes the legitimate objects of pity even more pitiful in order better to enjoy being sorry for them. His own emotions are so hyperenthralling to him that he generalizes them and writes of himself as le poète, which Lasserre considers inane. Lasserre is quite incapable of envisaging Jammes as the poète maudit, scorned, persecuted and insulted by the rest of the race.[105] To him, a writer's dissecting his own personality before an audience is permissible only if he avoid doing it with the air of introducing the watchers to a shrine.[106] This is Jammes' weak point; when he is forced to deal with sentiments common to the race and not with his private emotional apparatus, he is on unfamiliar ground; "...son esprit montre à cet égard un discernement assez imparfait et (que) le sens qu'il a des mouvements et des réactions d'une sensibilité normale n'est pas sans lacunes ni sans confusions. Il y a des nuances de sentiment familières et bien établies pour nous et par lesquelles son attention est moins attirée...."[107]

This condition helps produce the preciosity often visible in Jammes' work. His return to Catholicism, presumably an aid in comprehending the common lot, has not helped him. Indeed, his statements to the effect that the faithful idiot is a superior being to the "médiocres" who read Renan indicate the opposite of

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[103]Idem, p.69.
[104]Idem, p.135.
[105]Idem, p.80.
[106]Idem, p.83.
[107]Idem, p.116.

progress toward any sort of accurate moral analysis.[108]

These defects, Lasserre is ready to admit, leave places in the poetry of James quite untouched. His objection is aimed at those who find Jammes' merits not in the untouched portions but in the very parts where his defects are most obvious.

> ...Ces offenses, savez-vous plutôt où je les aperçois? Dans un certain genre d'inventions, de passages, que j'ai vu de belles âmes (il n'en manque pas aujourd'hui parmi les admiratrices de M. Jammes) préférer, remarquer parmi tous les autres du même auteur, comme des miracles de grâce et de distinction poétique. Aurais-je le sens perverti?[109]

Here again, as in the article on Claudel, every sentence is a part of the conclusion.

Charles Péguy had also been subjected to the subversive influences of the end of the century and again Lasserre finds that the very defects for which these influences are accountable contribute impressively to his success. In all Péguy's work he sees one serious fault: the man disdained to cultivate himself, to develop seriously and vigorously his intelligence and to learn to use the tools of the writer, ideas.[110]

Péguy's advent to the intellectual world had found it in the throes of an extreme reaction against intellectualism which followed the death of the arch-intellectual Renan. The intellectual class had deserted its aloofness for an orgy of efforts to stimulate social progress. It was the time of the Union pour l'Action morale, which attempted to bring to the populace the fruits of culture. Full of laudable sentiments the most promising younger minds carried Ibsen, Tolstoi, Pascal and Carlyle to the working men of the faubourgs, hoping that in doing so they themselves might receive some sort of spiritual rejuvenation from their cultural inferiors.

[108] Idem, p.122.
[109] Idem, p.114.
[110] Idem, p.164.

Was this not, Lasserre asks, admitting the sterility of their intellectual life? Did it not contain an intrinsic denial of the desirability and necessity of the protracted study and training which alone keep alive a high degree of culture?[111] Péguy, encountering this sentiment, dispensed with the normal education indispensable to the proper handling of ideas. Despite an excellent religious and moral training, his deficiencies are forever visible in his work.

> ...Ce qui lui a fait défaut, c'est la formation rationnelle qui est le fruit d'études philosophiques, historiques, littéraires, longuement poursuivies, et c'est le sentiment de la valeur, de la nécessité de cette formation pour ce qu'il voulait faire; défaut qui s'est traduit chez ce terrible impatient par beaucoup de faiblesse dans le domaine des idées générales et une singulière incapacité de s'y mouvoir...[112]

The reaction against Renan had discredited anything smacking of "dilettantisme," and there had grown up a tendency to distinguish between the intelligence and the other human faculties--sentiment, nobility of feeling--with an overwhelming superiority accorded to the latter. In any conflict between thought and action, action was the favored party. To Lasserre, always a champion of the intellect, it seemed paradoxical indeed to purchase a reawakening of moral energy at the price of a diminution of the energy of the mind.[113]

Péguy had found justification for his attitude in the then popular philosophy of Bergson. Lasserre, who had declared before the war that he did not hold Bergson responsible for the excesses of his disciples, does not, in this instance, place blame upon the author of the Données immédiates de la conscience. Neither, for that matter, does he especially blame Péguy, much of whose work he admires. But he does reproach with great severity those who prefer, among Peguy's writings, those in which this weakness is most evident.

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[111]Idem, pp.147-152.
[112]Idem, p.169.
[113]Idem, p.163.

Since, in the case of each of these three authors Lasserre's theme is the same--that they are weak where they have failed to follow tradition--and since traditionalism has been one of the keynotes to his criticism since the beginning of his association with Maurras, les Chapelles littéraires must be regarded somewhat as a continuation of the critic's Maurrasian tendency. The hatred of snobbery so patent in this book, and which, at this time, made Lasserre refer to Marcel Proust as "...l'écrivain le plus empesé de son temps,"[114] while not especially characteristic of Maurras, indicates at least nothing new to Lasserre. What is new in the Chapelles littéraires is Lasserre's impatience with parties and cliques; in this book as in the Mistral he is arguing for less artistic and intellectual sectarianism, for more freedom and independence. Was not this what he was also seeking for himself at this time? What was the Action Française itself but a clique? Are not these two books reflections of the need of greater freedom which he was experiencing in himself? This is far from a repudiation of his earlier work, but it does indicate in what direction during the years to come the critic is likely to move.

Thus, at the end of this phase of his career, which may be considered finished with the publication of the Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan in 1925, Lasserre has evolved perceptibly from what he was in 1907-1914, although not evenly; his evolution has been more complete in some departments of his work than in others. In his treatment of Renan he has accomplished nothing less than an about-face. In regard to Germany he has shown himself a great deal less severe than could have been expected from his pronouncements on the same subject of an earlier period. Now that the war is over and the Republic has demonstrated its ability to weather a crisis, he has dropped away from the Action Française and the "appareil strangulatoire" of Maurras. His view of Romanticism has been modified, and he is much less austere in his judgment of the nineteenth century, but

[114] Marcel Proust, humoriste et moraliste, RU, July 1, 1920.

the essentials of his critical attitude toward it, as outlined originally in the Romantisme français are unchanged. He has, in a word, grown more liberal. His problem from now on is to arrive at a definition of his new liberalism.

Chapter Five

LASSERRE AS A LIBERAL CRUSADE FOR LIBERALISM

When the first two volumes of the Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan were published, in 1925, Lasserre was fifty-eight years old and had already been viewing his career in retrospect. In the preface to Mes Routes, a collection of his articles, published in 1924, he had denied having any concern with the public's notion of his evolution, but admitted his interest in correcting certain false impressions regarding it.[1] A number of articles in this book bore the dates of their original publication. In 1927 appeared La Statue volée, another collection of dated essays written between 1895-1901. Des Romantiques à nous, 1927, redefined his attitude toward Romanticism. This was followed in 1928 by a volume of pages choisies, called Trente années de vie littéraire, and by still a third collection of reprinted and dated essays, Faust en France. Each volume of reprints was carefully annotated wherever there appeared an opinion with which he could no longer agree.[2] Thus it seems patent that he was more concerned with what his readers thought of his career than he cared to admit.

In 1928 he declares forthrightly--

> A la fin des morceaux qui composent ce volume, j'ai indiqué l'année où ils furent écrits. Ces dates s'échelonnent sur une durée d'environ quinze ans. Je les signale à l'attention du lecteur, au cas qu'il se fut laissé persuader par certains articles de journaux que j'ai éprouvé une crise ou une révolution dans mes idées...[3]

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[1] Mes Routes, p.ii.

[2] See, for example La Statue volée, p.58, note:--"Ce passage sur Mme. de Staël me paraît aujourd'hui bien inconvenant...etc."

[3] Faust en France, p.iv.

The reason for the forthrightness of 1928 is suggested by Lasserre's frequent allusions to his advancing age. He is not sure that there is enough time left for him to finish the Renan.[4] At the age of sixty-one he finishes one section of the preface to the Statue volée with a nostalgic "...souvenirs d'hier. Vieux souvenirs."[5] As he grows older he becomes more aware that posterity will judge him largely on what he has already done.

One fact concerning his reprint collections is arresting: while a preponderant part of the material in the three books was written between 1912 and 1928, and a part before 1902, the period between 1902 and 1912 is represented by seven extracts from the Romantisme français and by nothing else. These extracts are: Benjamin Constant, Lamartine, Chateaubriand, Vigny, l'Amour romantique, Une Définition du romantisme, and L'Individualisme révolutionnaire, in none of which does he attain the austerity and severity of the chapters on Rousseau or Hugo. The chapters on Cousin, Michelet and Renan are left uncited. Nothing is reproduced from La Doctrine officielle de l'Université. Indeed, as M. André Bellessort points out, "Ce Lasserre combatif et combattant, nous ne le trouvons point dans les pages choisies."[6]

Worth remarking also is a reprinted passage called Virgile et la Guerre. Originally part of an essay in the Revue hebdomadaire in 1915 under the title, Retour aux anciens, it was rebaptized for a first reprinting in Cinquante ans de pensée française. In both these printings there appear several pages, where Lasserre's Anti-Germanic feeling is extremely apparent, which have been completely omitted in the second reprinting. In this, its final appearance, the passage is placed in Trente années de vie littéraire under the rubric, Pages lyriques.

From his selection of material for these reprint volumes, it is quite evident that Lasserre is trying to minimize the importance of his polemic work. One aspect of his work and one period of his life remain unilluminated.

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[4] Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, preface, p.vii.
[5] La Statue volée, p.19.
[6] Trente années de vie littéraire, p.vi, preface by Bellessort.

An article published in September, 1928, which Lasserre liked so well that he reprinted it twice,[7] reveals what may have dictated the choice. In it he maintains that at the beginning of his career he was a liberal and that if at one moment in his life he abandoned temporarily his liberalism he soon allowed his natural inclinations to bring him back to a liberal attitude. This moment is, of course, the time so frugally represented in the essay collections.

From these considerations we conclude, in other words, that Lasserre was very anxious that a central unity should be found running through all his work, and that the unifying factor should appear to be his liberal disposition. To this conclusion point the choice of material in the collected essays, the datings, the publication of Des Romantiques à nous and of his definition of liberalism in Mise au Point.

I

Lasserre's definition of liberalism was written partly in protest against the pejorative use of the word. He finds it curious that the adjective "liberal", which defines a laudable intellectual attitude, should have become an insult.

> ...Un véritable esprit libéral, se refusant à toute opinion qui prétendrait s'imposer à lui par l'autorité ou convention pure, n'a garde d'affirmer rien avant d'en avoir éprouvé la vérité personnellement. C'est ce respect délicat du vrai, respect fait d'amour pour ce que le vrai a toujours de plus intrinsèquement riche que le faux, qu'un dogmatisme expéditif, simplificateur et butor, dont on ne pourrait citer que trop d'exemples contemporains, se fait une joie maligne de calomnier en le travestissant de dilettantisme stérile, en impuissance d'opter entre le oui et le non, à professer une chose plutôt qu'une autre. Un véritable libéral est un honnête homme qui pousse fort loin le sentiment et le ménagement de

[7] Retour au libéralisme, NL, Sept. 8, 1928. Reprinted in Trente années de vie littéraire as Brève histoire de mes idées, and in Mise au point, as Retour au libéralisme.

la personnalité chez les autres...[8]

He being independent of all party spirit, the criterium of a liberal's judgment is the truth alone. Eclectic the liberal must be, for implicit in his attitude is a freedom from systems: the homme à système is his diametrical opponent. Lasserre praises M. René Gillouin for being--

> ...un des rares écrivains de nos jours qui ne recherche l'appui d'aucun parti, et qui ferait une question d'honneur intellectuelle de rejeter cet appui, s'il venait s'offrir. Me demanderez-vous quel est son système? Il n'en a pas: c'est un esprit juste.[9]

The liberal naturally follows this behavior, while he strives for intellectual hospitality, seeking to--

> ...embrasser avec même force tous les éléments de la question, et de s'arrêter à une solution qui ne sacrifiât aucun, qui ne laissât tomber rien d'humainement précieux, de vital. Ni les connaissances scientifiques, et historiques modernes dans l'acquisition desquelles les facultés constitutives de l'esprit humain se sont aiguisées et qui ont mis le christianisme en présence d'interrogations bien redoutables pour lui. Ni le christianisme lui-même, qui a enrichi son apport original de l'héritage des civilisations et des sagesses antiques. Ni ces aspirations vivantes à l'infini qui, dans leur effort pour se contenter, ont crée chez les modernes tant de poésie et tant de pensée. La disposition d'un esprit qui ne saurait voir périr sans horreur aucun de ces trésors, aucune de ces acquisitions de l'humanité, est une disposition juste et bonne. C'est la disposition libérale.[10]

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[8] Mise au point, p.11.
[9] Idem, p.95.
[10] Idem, p.75.

Liberalism, although neither essentially optimistic nor essentially pessimistic, maintains its confidence in human nature. It does not affirm the inevitability of human progress but assumes that such progress is not impossible and refuses to consider lost any great human effort to grasp the true, create the beautiful or determine the good.[11] It avoids with equal care dogmatism and scepticism.[12] Lasserre is convinced that no great, civilized country which has an active intellectual life can afford to lack a liberalism like this. A liberal élite is necessary to prevent the ruin of culture at the hands of parties and sects, as well as to preserve the only sort of atmosphere in which it is possible for culture to flourish. This is especially true of France, of whose culture the world asks so much.[13] "Il est temps," he exclaims, "de réhabiliter le libéralisme."[14]

From a liberalism of this type Lasserre's disposition of the Action Française period seems discreet indeed! Yet, while he does not claim to have been a liberal during that time, he insists that he was not the anti-liberal his critics thought him to be.

> Tout cela demeure livré à la discussion, je ne fais pas mon apologie. Ce que je veux dire, c'est que les limites d'application de mes remarques me distinguaient de ceux-là qui, soit en France, soit en Allemagne, traitant le même sujet avec une ambition d'esprit bien plus grande, prétendaient fonder toute une philosophie de l'histoire sur l'éternelle opposition du romantisme et du classicisme, ou plutôt sur l'opposition d'un principe de désordre et d'un principe d'ordre, dont le premier serait, à les en croire, incarné chez les Juifs, les Orientaux, les Protestants et enfin les romantiques du XIXe siècle, tandis que le second se serait manifesté dans la civilisation et les lettres gréco-romaines, puis dans les

[11] Idem, p.75.

[12] Faust en France, p.129--Lasserre cites, as admirable in this respect the philosopher Bergson. "...Son exemple nous ensiegne que dogmatisme et scepticisme sont deux erreurs entre lesquelles nous n'avons pas à choisir..." The critic had not always been so kind.

[13] Mise au point, p.73. [14] Idem, p.13.

> trois beaux siècles français écoulés entre la Renaissance et la Révolution....un tel système risque fort de produire un résultat d'appauvrissement et de sécheresse et de faire d'hostilité sur les dispositions de sympathie et d'accueil...A trop de choses, et des plus précieuses, il dit non!
>
> Je ne l'ai jamais professé...[15]

Lasserre's references to liberalism made during his association with Maurras show, however, that at that time he scarcely considered himself a liberal. In 1901 he regards the liberalism of Lucien Bergeret simply as weakness of character.[16] In 1907, when he attributes to himself a sort of liberalism, he hastens to explain that it is--

> ...le libéralisme aristocratique...(qui) concu dans toute l'ampleur de ses conditions et dans toutes les possibilités d'extension sociale, aboutit à la doctrine dont on s'inspire ici.[17]

He approves, in 1912, of the effort of Fustel de Coulanges "...tant contre ce romantisme effréné, que contre celui, mol et fade, du libéralisme de droite et de gauche." Here Lasserre is himself using the word in a pejorative sense.[18]

Lasserre is, however, unwilling to repudiate the Romantisme français. In Des Romantiques à nous he refers to it as "...un livre que nous avons publié il y a tout juste vingt ans, et qui présente du romantisme une notion dont nous n'avons rien à retirer après cette période d'épreuve, tant les contradictions en ont confirmé la valeur...[19] He maintains also that Romanticism is characteristic of the aspirations which distinguish the first half of the nineteenth century from the second:

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[15]Idem, p.32.

[16]La Statue volée, p.57. "La liberté, c'est le fait de la force. Ou, si l'on veut, une force, une puissance sont libres en proportion de la modification dont elles marquent ou dont elles menacent ce qui les entoure..."

[17]Le Romantisme français, footnote, 337. Lasserre is referring to a similar use of the word in E. Faguet, Politiques et moralistes, Paris, Boivin, n.d., I, p.229.

[18]La Doctrine officielle etc., p.440.

[19]Des Romantiques à nous, p.34.

He is, however, reluctant to define Romanticism, and confines himself to reaffirming that it exists.

> ...Quand un terme a la vie si dure, et qu'il a fourni l'aliment de tant de controverses, c'est, à coup sûr, que quelque grosse réalité y correspond, si difficile qu'il puisse être de définir cette réalite et de traduire en idée claire le sentiment fort et confus que chacun en a ....[20]

Furthermore, he admits the possibility of several interpretations of the history of Romanticism. Whereas in 1907 he had treated Rousseau as the one fountainhead of the movement, in 1927 he sees three possible sources.

> ...Il n'est pas faux de faire commencer le romantisme français à Chateaubriand. Il ne l'est pas d'avantage de trouver qu'il entre en scène aux premiers écrits de Rousseau, non plus que de présenter Rousseau comme le plus éloquent annonciateur de sentiments politiques et de tendances morales qui s'étaient répandues dans la société et les livres avant sa venue.[21]

Lasserre does not believe the influence of Rousseau of such great importance as he once did, as he is more tolerant[22] toward him.

This new tolerance reappears in the treatment of the sacerdoce du poète. The role of the poet as social and political prophet had been examined in detail in Le Romantisme français, and judged severely: France had suffered for attempting to model itself according to the irresponsible utterances of poets. In 1927 Lasserre does not retract his judgment, but lessens its severity by saying that he does not see how, in the circumstances,

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[20]Idem, p.34.

[21]Idem, p.10.

[22]Compare the following judgments: ...Les champs ne suffisaient pas aux plaisirs de Jean-Jacques. Soupirant d'avoir grisonné sans rencontrer sur cette terre une situation qui contentât son coeur il se composa un romanesque cortège d'héroines et de héros qui le gavaient d'amour. De cette débauche est née La Nouvelle Héloise... (Le Romantisme français, p.51); and: ...l'inspiration...est sortie d'une débauche de rêverie amoureuse et romanesque, à laquelle Jean-

a different condition could have obtained. The decline of the old authorities, who had asked no aid from poets in non-literary matters, had left each man to find his own solution to the social, political and other problems of contemporary life. How could the poet, most sensitive and imaginative of men, avoid being bewildered in such a welter, and how could the élite, which so much delighted in poetry, fail to be interested in the poet's ideas on non-poetic matters, even to the point of finding them oracular?

> ...Les temps romantiques eux-mêmes...imposèrent ce rôle aux porteurs de lyre. Une société qui ne pouvait plus sentir en sa situation ni son établissement aucun élément durable, qui assistait à la lutte profonde en sa propre conscience et dans ses propres institutions, des tendances voltairiennes et des tendances chrétiennes, de la tradition et de la révolution, du patriarcat ancien et du socialisme naissant, et qui, ne voyant pas d'issue à ces conflits de forces égales, subissaient l'obsession constante d'une inquiète interrogation sur son avenir, une telle société eût trouvé bien froid, bien indifférent à ses préoccupations le thème commun des poètes du XVIIe siècle, l'étude de l'homme universel et des passions humaines en général...[23]

While this does not alter Lasserre's old proposition, that the public rôle of the poet was harmful, it removes much odium from Vigny, Lamartine, Hugo and Musset. The fundamental idea is unchanged, but the austerity of the critic is less remarkable.

Footnote Continued. Jacques s'est abandonné pendant plusieurs mois à l'âge de quarante-quatre ans, comme pour échapper à la fois au regret immense que lui cause le vide de sa vie sentimentale passée et à la certitude désespérante que les années qui lui restent ne lui apporteront point ce que sa jeunesse n'a pu avoir... Des Romantiques à nous, p.80 .

[23]Idem, p.58.

II

From the preceding pages it appears that Lasserre's liberalism was largely synonymous with independence from parties, and that the basic ideas of the Romantisme français were hardly changed, although the aging critic showed signs of greater mellowness. More light is thrown on the problem by his explicit statements regarding what parties in particular he deemed it desirable to separate oneself from.

The opposite of the liberal, in Lasserre's mind, is what he calls l'esprit primaire--

> ...un esprit qui a vieilli, sans dépasser, en son développement, le stade scolaire. C'est un adulte resté écolier, mais sans la fraîcheur, qui ne fait pas la différence entre les questions réelles que la vie nous donne à résoudre, et les questions conventionnelles, artificiellement simplifiées, qui font l'objet des travaux de collège.[24]

As esprits primaires Lasserre cites particularly the Neo-Thomist school and, without naming him, Charles Maurras.

The critic takes care to state that his attack is not aimed at any philosopher as such, but at a habit of mind prevalent among a number of writers who are Thomists, even though they have not necessarily read Saint Thomas.[25] Neo-Thomism itself he dismisses as simplistic and inadequate to the needs of the modern world. Ostensibly he has nothing against Jacques Maritain, since the latter is a respectable philosopher, but we are already aware that, following the publication of the Jeunesse in 1925, each man has expressed a poor opinion of the other. Lasserre admits that he thinks of Maritain less as a philosopher than as a chercheur d'âmes.[26]

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[24]Mise au point, p.78.
[25]Idem; article, le Néo-Thomisme et l'esprit primaire, passim.
[26]Idem, p.95.

In the case of Maritain's lieutenant Massis, Lasserre is more outspoken. Massis' Défense de l'occident, a simplistic handling of a complicated question,[27] lacks finesse to an extent which makes it possible for "...une heureuse ignorance, munie de deux ou trois dogmes d'école primaire, qui ont réponse à tout, de les aborder d'un petit air magistral qui fait illusion..."[28] Lasserre has no sympathy with Massis' reactionary conclusion that the last four centuries have marked a retrogression in civilization and morality.[29] Massis and Maritain are types which the liberal should avoid.

Of Maurras he speaks indirectly, through a criticism of Joseph de Maistre. The total absence of any allusion, in so many pages on the Revolution, to the healthy reforms which it effected and which have been sanctioned by their continuous use, now impresses Lasserre unfavorably.[30] De Maistre is one of those to whom--

> ...noircir la Révolution...semble une oeuvre si satisfaisante en soi-même que l'application qu'ils y mettent ne leur permet pas la recherche, plus laborieuse et plus délicate, de ce que la Révolution aurait dû rabattre de ses principes pour les mettre d'accord avec une saine physique sociale et les rendre bons.[31]

Lasserre's own thesis regarding the Revolution, in 1928, is that it existed already in germ in the social, political and intellectual changes which took place during the eighteenth century. The monarchy fell because it failed to keep step with these. The civil and administrative reforms which followed were good in so far as they were necessary adaptations to circumstances; they were bad in so far as they were the realization of certain abstract notions of justice and reason--the "ideas of 1789." The latter were "...comme

[27] Idem: article, le Destin de l'occident, passim.
[28] Idem, p.95.
[29] Idem, p.90.
[30] Idem, p.66.
[31] Idem, p.20.

une sorte de mythe brillant où nos pères, en une heure d'effervescence généreuse, inscrivirent des espérances aussi imprudentes qu'illimitées."[32] Lasserre no more defends such ideas in 1928 than he did in 1907, but he now thinks them less important.

The admiration for Maurras for de Maistre is so well known that it is impossible to read Lasserre's statement that the disciples of de Maistre are the enemies of liberalism without interpreting it as a judgment on Maurras.[33] The same is true of the remark of Lasserre, that he had never systematized his beliefs into a hard and fast philosophy, as certain others had done.[34] A footnote to La Statue volée, explains that Lasserre was never, in the true sense of the word, a positivist, and reminds us that Maurras was an avowed positivist.[35] In another place Lasserre refers to Maurras by name and suggests the narrowness of the latter's view.

> Tout bon lettré a goûté la saveur de la brimade douanière infligée par Charles Maurras aux idées de Mme de Staël sur la supériorité des nations protestantes et des littératures du Nord quand il les appelle les idées suisses. Mais ces idées ayant plu à Taine et Renan qui n'étaient pas Suisses et qui les ont mises en bon français, comment échapper au devoir de les prendre corps à corps et de dégager ce qu'elles peuvent contenir soit de confusion et de trouble, soit d'enrichissante substance?[36]

Lest this separation from Maurras be taken to indicate a move toward the Left in Lasserre's politics, we must record that with the esprits primaires already mentioned, he also classes the theoricians of Marxism.[37]

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[32] Idem, p.23.

[33] Idem, p.21. See also; Georges Sorel, théoricien de l'impérialisme.

[34] Mise au point; article, le Génie polémique de Joseph de Maistre, passim.

[35] p.51.

[36] Mise au point, p.54.

[37] Idem, p.10.

From his remarks about the Dreyfus Case it is clear that when the nation is endangered, liberalism must be abandoned.[38] He insists that intellectual liberalism and political liberalism are not the same.[39] Socialism he speaks of as a grand évènement, but he condemns Jaurès,[40] and thinks the Socialists as anti-liberal as the reactionaries.

> Disciples de Joseph de Maistre et disciples de Karl Marx, radicalement opposés sur les principes, mais se ressemblant par leur volonté de déduire d'un même principe et de réunir en un corps de doctrine unique, indivisible et impératif, leur politique, leur sociologie, leur philosophie de l'histoire, et jusqu'à leur métaphysique, se trouvent d'accord pour reconnaître dans les esprits libéraux leurs naturels adversaires...[41]

The liberal's politics, then, will be whatever the interests of the country demand, (as Lasserre's own politics have on occasion been anti-liberal), but the liberal must avoid the intellectual domination of the leaders of the parties.

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[38]Idem, p.117-120; Faust en France, p.119; La Statue volée, p.17.

[39]Nous parlons ici non pas du libéralisme politique, mais du libéralisme intellectuel. Il arrive qu'on les confonde. Et la confusion leur est préjudiciable à tous deux: au premier, par les exagérations où elle peut induire; au second, par les responsabilités dont elle incline une opinion mal instruite à le charger arbitrairement. A vrai dire, les objets auxquels ils se rapportent sont fort différents. Le libéralisme politique est une certaine conception du gouvernement de l'état. Le libéralisme intellectuel est une certaine conception de l'éducation des esprits, je ne dis pas tant de leur éducation au collège que de leur éducation en générale et dans tout le cours de la vie. L'un est affaire de chaque nation. L'autre interesse le genre humain, en ce qu'il contribue à son développement le plus élevé. Le degré de libéralisme intellectuel et morale de l'élite d'un peuple de haute culture ne mesure pas le degré de libéralisme politique dont il peut avoir besoin, ou qu'il peut être capable de supporter, et qui varie selon les saisons. On conçoit même des cas où l'intérêt du libéralisme intellectuel exigerait la suppression momentanée du libéralisme politique... Georges Sorel, etc..., p.259.

[40]Des Romantiques à nous, p.9.

[41]Mise au point, p.10.

Here Lasserre closely approaches the position of Julien Benda. Stated in less absolute terms than he himself uses, Benda's belief is that the intellectual (clerc) should serve the spiritual and eternal rather than the material and temporal by abstention from party strife; the treason of the intellectual has been to put himself at the disposition of the political and racial passions and to defend them. Benda's Trahison des clercs is at once a critique of intellectuals who, like Maurras, participate in factional disputes, and a prophecy of the dire straits in which Europe will fall if their practice continues. The position which Lasserre describes for the liberal is, in the main, similar to that prescribed by Benda for the clerc.[42]

III

On the whole, Lasserre is now less interested in politics than, previously, he has been. Writing less than six months before his death in reference to the chapter, le Jacobinisme centralisateur, and his reasons for relegating it to the appendix in his new edition of the Mistral, he declares, "...en outre, je me sens de moins en moins porté à doctriner sur les choses de la politique."[43] This is the key-note of his writing whenever, during these last years, he returns to the familiar political topics.

Lasserre is still a patriot, but he does not now persist in pushing the ramifications of patriotism quite so far. He still insists that France owes the world the benefit of her cultural experience, but no longer expects the world to be grateful.

> Ne croyons pas que nous puissions intéresser abondamment l'univers à notre passé littéraire. De la part des étrangers, la curiosité et le culte en seront toujours chose exceptionnelle. Nos grands auteurs sont surtout à notre usage. Ils restent pour nous, avec les grands maîtres gréco-latins, la source nécessaire pour nous recharger de vigeur et de lumière. Ce n'est que

[42] See, La Trahison des clercs, passim.
[43] Frédéric Mistral,...etc., p.9.

> par notre utilité immédiate que nous vaudrons. Cette utilité consistera à nous servir passionnément de nos dons français pour aider le monde contemporain tout d'abord à se connaître et à se comprendre lui-même, puis à s'élever au-dessus de lui-même en trouvant la voie simple et claire du Dieu véritablement universel auquel, accablé sous son propre matérialisme, il aspire de toute l'âme.[44]

France is still capable of being the intellectual guide of the world, but the world is less disposed than ever to seek salvation by gallic paths. Meanwhile, if the affiliation of French culture to the Greek and Latin is still visible to him, he insists less upon its being a mark of universal superiority, and leaves his definition of the esprit français purposely vague.[45]

> ...Enfin, n'abusons pas du bel exercice qui consiste à déployer des drapeaux où s'inscrivent ces mots superbes d'Occident, de latinité, d'esprit français...Soyons nous-mêmes: occidentaux, latins, grecs, français. Plongeons le plus profondément dans notre sol et nos traditions, mais que ce soit à seule fin de nous élever le plus haut possible et de pouvoir échanger jusqu'avec les confins de la terre des paroles d'intelligence et de sympathie. Cette ouverture de l'esprit et du coeur est plus conforme aux sentiments de nos pères, qu'un prétendu humanisme qui, à force de se limiter et de se montrer exclusif, risque de n'être plus humain. Celui qui est trop sur la défensive prouve qu'il n'est pas sûr de lui-même. Trop d'alarme pour ce qu'on a hérité prouverait qu'on ne sait plus le faire valoir.[46]

Lasserre is objecting here to exaggerated insistence upon abstractions which are unlikely to be

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[44] Mise au point, p.56.
[45] Idem, p.100.
[46] Idem, p.101.

productive. When the moment demands the comparison of a foreign culture with that of France, as in the case of a specified work of art, he falls back on the familiar conceptions. Thus he argues that it is unfair to criticize France for having produced no work like Faust, since doing so would have been unnatural to her state of culture.[47] Yet he is less anxious to compare one culture with another, en bloc, and the change in his attitude is reflected in his new utterances about Germany.

Toward Pan-Germanism the years have made him no more merciful--it is always a menace to civilization.[48] Lasserre clings to his old distinction between the "vieille Allemagne rhénane" and the new "Allemagne prussianisée et pangermaniste."[49] On the German mentality, although he has already expressed doubt about such generalizations, he permits himself to say, regarding a book by Louis Reynaud:[50]

> Si l'on voulait, comme lui, définir de la manière la plus générale ce qui oppose l'esprit germanique,à l'esprit français, il faudrait s'élever, me semble-t-il, à une idée plus compréhensive que la sienne: celle peut-être d'une certaine impuissance à la modération et à la mesure du côté germain, impuissance qui peut se traduire également par un excès d'abandon à la sensibilité et aux suggestions instictives...[51]

Moreover, the critic has not relinquished his old belief that Germany and German influence are partly responsible for "...la chose la plus lâche, la plus basse et la plus dangereuse de l'heure présente....la guerre à la raison, à l'énergie mentale, don français par excellence..."[52] He finds that Cousin and Taine

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[47] Faust en France, p.44.
[48] La Statue volée, p.9; Mes Routes, p.xiv.
[49] Faust en France, p.37.
[50] Le Romantisme; ses origines anglo-germaniques...
[51] Des Romantiques à nous, p.32.
[52] Idem, p.35.

were both harmed by their tendency to favor what is Germanic, Protestant and Anglo-Saxon.[53] Yet he does not believe German ideas necessarily inimical to the French mind, says that there are no such things as national ideas, and objects, in reality, only to indiscriminate intellectual hospitality.

He minimizes the sway of Nietzsche over his own development. Nietzsche was a genius, but a sick one, prone to exaggerations and too convinced that he was living a lone combat with a civilization insensitive to beauty. For a moment Nietzsche had turned Lasserre's head but, the critic adds, "...de nature je ne lui ressemblais pas."[54] However, he is less harsh to Hegel and admits more fully the Hegelian contribution to culture.

> ...Les encyclopédies d'une vraie science, les répertoires érudits et philologiques qui font autorité dans le monde, témoignent, au premier chef, pour la force du peuple qui a réussi à les mettre sur pied. La contribution générale des Allemands au progrès des connaissances historiques et des disciplines annexes de l'histoire est quelque chose de très imposant, et qui devait particulièrement leur rapporter du prestige dans un siècle qui a vu se rompre l'équilibre et la distribution séculaires des diverses parties de l'humanité, maintes nations ou races se relever d'un long sommeil, rentrer sur la scène, commencer une émigration. Et peut-être ce mouvement n'est-il encore qu'à son début. C'est par la considération de ces faits qu'on se rend compte, mieux qu'il ne me plaisait de le faire, de l'extrême importance de la philosophie hégélienne...[55]

From these remarks of Lasserre's on subjects likely to inspire nationalistic feelings, it is quite evident that he would like to avoid the dogmatic tone which had been characteristic of his earlier references to the same subjects. He could not always avoid it;

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[53]Idem, p.73.
[54]La Statue volée, p.15.
[55]Idem, footnote, p.74.

whenever a case for concrete international comparison arises, he relapses somewhat into the doctrinary mood the greater part of the time. Yet at least he is able to restrain his dogmatism in his more general statements regarding such abstractions as national esprits. This, in itself, is a sign of considerable change.

IV

Necessarily few because so much else occupied his mind during this short period, Lasserre's works of pure literary criticism strengthen none the less the impression that his taste and judgments themselves did not quite keep pace with the changes in his critical standards.

His favorite critic, still Sainte-Beuve, he defends, saying that while Sainte-Beuve's reluctance to praise his contemporaries is undeniable, it should only have made what praise he did give of higher value. Lasserre's article, a tribute to Sainte-Beuve's comprehension and taste, is evidence that he likes that critic as much now as he did in 1910.[56]

Stendhal, always his favorite, is valued for the "poetry" of his work. Only Stendhal's cold style has hidden the fact that he is primarily a dreamer. Lasthinks the Rouge et le noir less a "roman d'observation" than a "roman lyrique."[57] And equally strong is Lasserre's admiration for Balzac. "J'aime Balzac presque autant que Sainte-Beuve le hait."[58]

Michelet, once severely handled in the Romantisme français, Lasserre now calls a great poet and defender of the ideas of 1879,[59] and of Victor Hugo, whom he had also maltreated in the same book, he remarks with satisfaction:

> Les noms de Victor Hugo et de Renan ont connu ces vicissitudes qui ont fini par les dégager des vapeurs de l'idolâtrie et les placer sous la

[56] Des Romantiques à nous, p.65.
[57] Idem, p.65.
[58] Idem, p.73.
[59] Mise au point, p.18.

lumière d'une admiration réfléchie qui discerne amicalement le fort et le faible.[60]

From the more recent dead Lasserre singles out for special mention the two masters, France and Barrès. He is confident that after a short period of iconoclastic injustice, full justice will be done. France will attain "...au rang le plus eclatant des demi-dieux et touchant la sphère des dieux souverains, une place qui ne lui sera plus disputée."[61] And despite the dryness of Barrès, certain of his books, Le Jardin de Bérénice, Le Roman de l'énergie nationale, Colette Baudoche and Au Service de l'Allemagne "...défiéront le temps."[62]

Toward Péguy and Charles Sorel Lasserre is less favorably disposed. Recognising their fine qualities, he also finds that they--

...esprits fortement originaux et doués d'un incontestable génie, gâtent les manifestations littéraires de ce génie par une abondance trop peu mesurée et trop impulsive, par une trop grande part faite au "va-comme-je-te-pousse" sinon dans les formes du style, au moins dans l'invention et l'enchaînement des idées...[63]

On three of his living contemporaries his new opinion is strikingly dissimilar to the old. M. Bergson, to whom he had already made amends on one occasion, Lasserre thinks a master spoiled by the false interpretations of his disciples, but whose philosophy has lasting value.[64] M. Julien Benda, once antipathetic to him, is now the object of warm praise for the Lettres à Mélisande.[65] And M. Fernand Baldensperger, whose work had been cited by Lasserre in the Doctrine officielle de l'université as an example of what was weak in the Sorbonne, is now mentioned for his "beaux travaux" on Goethe.[66]

[60]Faust en France, p.100.
[61]Idem, p.111.
[62]Idem, p.115.
[63]Idem, p.123.
[64]Idem; article, le Destin de Bergson, passim.
[65]Des Romantiques à nous, p.103.
[66]Faust en France, note, p.29.

Before the relatively less arresting figures of Joseph Delteil and Paul Morand, Lasserre's position is reminiscent at once of his earlier criticism of realism, and of a remark of the Sainte-Beuve which he so much admired. He appreciates the force of Delteil's writing, but he would prefer to see less of the man's biceps and more of his discernment and taste.[67] In another place, speaking of the expression of Morand, "...la tôle usagée du ciel, avec des taches d'acide déjà à l'Orient," he says:

> ...les lecteurs de Paul Morand, à qui j'emprunte cette phrase sacrilège, savent tout ce qu'on peut apporter de verve et d'esprit dans cette insulte à l'oeuvre de dieu. Les lecteurs de Delteil ne l'ignorent pas non plus...[68]

To his earlier theories on Poetry Lasserre remains faithful. His criteria still are those of Les Chapelles littéraires. He suggests Mistral as an antidote for poetry written for specialists.

> ...On se plaint aujourd'hui que la poésie, celle du moins de qualité rare, c'est à dire la seule qui vaille, devienne une chose d'initiés, une fruit de serre-chaude que les poètes cultivent entre eux, et d'une saveur trop fugitive et subtile pour être goutée du public. A cette erreur opposons l'inspiration mistralienne, cueillie en pleine humanité, en pleine nature, en pleine vie, en plein ciel, et manifestée pourtant en des milliers de vers et de strophes d'une essence aussi mystérieusement magique que ce qu'il peut y avoir de plus beau chez Baudelaire ou chez Mallarmé. Oh! qu'il était loin de notre poète de se donner des facilités pour ne point être banal en se privant d'être humain...[69]

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[67] Cf: Sainte-Beuve, Mes Poisons, Paris, Plon, 1926.--"Hugo ne fait cas, au fond, que de la puissance..." p.50.

[68] Des Romantiques à nous, p.130-143, passim.

[69] Mise au point, p.115. In addition, see:--"il (Sorel) condamne donc une littérature d'esthètes, une littérature qui ne vit plus que de littérature, qui ne rend plus que des sentiments et des imaginations cultivées dans la serre-chaude littéraire, et accessibles aux seuls mandarins, une littérature pour littérateurs exclusivement.

That two of the essays in Mise au point are devoted to Mistral is high evidence of Lasserre's esteem and of the place Mistral holds in his preferences. The critic refers with pride to his own effort, the first made in France, to rescue Mistral from neglect.[70] The lack of a strong human element in poetry appears to him a menace; he is saying now what he was saying two decades before when he proclaimed that no work of art springs up without a previously prepared and long maintained culture. Mistral is still his example of how one may be "antique et contemporain à la fois."[71]

Meanwhile he also remains faithful to Goethe. The title essay of Faust en France is Lasserre's final attempt to bring out the meaning of the "bible of his youth."[72] He regrets that, of all the French translators of Goethe, none has grasped the whole work. This is partly Goethe's fault, since he has left his treatment in fragmentary form, but the real difficulty is not that Faust defied the competence of the dramatist; it defies the drama itself and breaks constantly over the natural limits of dramatic art. To Lasserre's mind, Faust is a magnificent attempt to dramatize the biography of a human soul and to epitomize, at the same time, the experience of the race. To present thus, simultaneously, the concrete and allegorical aspects of a subject so rich in implications, is beyond the scope of drama.

Footnote Continued.

C'est le grand mal dont nous souffrons de nos jours, où il semble que la production des écrivains tende de plus en plus à se partager entre une littérature qui trouve un public parce qu'elle est vulgaire et une littérature qui n'est pas vulgaire, mais qui si meurt de préciosité, de recherche. Ce qui ne tombe dans l'un ni dans l'autre genre a quelques chances d'être ce qui est bon. Mais ce qui est bon est exposé à la fois de deux grands périls: celui de n'être pas apprécié du public du jour, en tant que trop riche de pensée et de sentiment; celui d'être rebuté des littérateurs, en tant que trop sain. G. Sorel...p.120.

[70] Mise au point, p.103.

[71] See, in addition: ...Quelles lacunes pourtant chez les artistes modernes, même dotés de génie, qui ne se sont point nourris aux plus hauts chefs-d'oeuvre des vieilles époques! Preuve que jusqu'en cet ordre, où il semblerait que toute chose réussie se suffise absolument à soi-même, tout ce qui est bon est gros de semences capables de féconder les temps et les lieux les plus divers! L'art antique avait une simplicité de fond qui s'accordait à merveille avec son idéal d'harmonie. L'art moderne à beaucoup trop à exprimer pour viser avec autant d'aisance à être harmonieux. Mais quelles difformités le menacent s'il ne tempère son intensité et sa fièvre d'expression d'une certaine harmonie apprise chez les anciens. G. Sorel....p.255.

> ...Considéré dans ses épisodes, le Faust est une suite d'oeuvres d'art inégales en beauté, dont quelques-unes brillent au premier rang de la littérature universelle. Pris comme ensemble, il est une construction pédagogique, un programme d'éducation de l'individu et de l'humanité.[73]

Such he considers Faust in his last treatment of it. How constantly the work was on his mind may be gathered from his having hoped that he could once more take up the subject of the unity of Faust, (a hope frustrated by his death) and his having said that he wished that the Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan might, in its way, be the Faust of Pierre Lasserre.[74]

In these literary judgments, it is undeniable that Lasserre has made amendes honorables to Hugo, Michelet, Bergson, Benda and others. He has, in the case of certain individuals, tempered his earlier austerity. Yet from his remarks on poetry, and on the novel, we see that, despite his desire to be more liberal, his likes and dislikes in literature have not greatly changed. The influence of his liberal theories upon his taste is not by any means so great as one might have expected.

V

During this period, Lasserre wrote four other books which, while they throw no additional light on his new liberalism, furnish us with documents on the liberal critic at work.

Why Lasserre wrote Le Secret d'Abélard, a novel inspired by his study of Catholic thought for the Jeunesse, is hard to see. If Abelard's executioner had missed his mark, what might have happened? This theme, obviously, offers to the esprit gaulois rich opportunities, none of which is missed by Lasserre. The tale belongs to the sixteenth century. Aside from what it shows of Lasserre's knowledge of Abelard and his time, Lasserre's betrayal of the Secret d'Abélard serves only

[73] Faust en France, p.43.
[74] A.M. Gasztowtt, Pierre Lasserre, p.38.

to emphasize a part of his talent which, because of the sobriety traditional in literary criticism, he had had relatively little chance to exercise.

A different Abelard, not to say a different Lasserre, appears in Un Conflit religieux au XIIIe siècle, 1930, which had had its origin in a lecture given at Dijon in 1927.[75] Here the critic is not disporting himself. His purpose is to expose the meaning of Abelard's thought in relation to the time.

Abelard was a Breton. More than a hundred pages of the first volume of the Jeunesse had been devoted to the Breton race, and Lasserre had arrived at a hypothesis which linked the revolutionary tendencies of Pelagius, Abelard, Lamennais, and Chateaubriand with their racial heritage. This had not escaped criticism. M. Jacques Boulenger, in Renan et ses critiques, had argued that Lasserre had erred first, in looking on the flourishing of the medieval Breton Cycle as a manifestation of Breton culture when it was really not Celtic but French and, second, that Lasserre had mistaken for a renaissance of Breton culture in the nineteenth century what was, more likely, one aspect of the outbreak of Romanticism. These propositions once established, Lasserre's theory of the native Breton incompatibility to Latin civilization, with its corollary that the fruition of one meant sterility for the other, would be seriously weakened. Already in Des Romantiques à nous, his article Y a-t-il une âme bretonne had defended the critic's right to generalize upon the character of the race.

> ...J'ai laissé agir sur moi les évènements, les figures, les créations du monde breton présent et passé. Après quoi, voulant évoquer l'âme commune, la liaison et la continuité intérieure, le principe d'unité morale de ce monde vaste et mystérieux, je me suis replié sur toutes ces impressions et j'ai rêvé. Il n'y avait pas prise à une méthode plus scientifique. Elle m'aurait donne moins de vérité...[76]

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[75] Un Conflit religieux au XIIe siècle; Abélard contre Saint-Bernard.

[76] Des Romantiques à nous, p.90.

Passing over M. Boulenger's assertion that the Breton flowering of the twelfth century was not Breton but French, Lasserre answers him on the question of Romanticism by explaining that there is a romantic strain in the Breton nature.

> S'il y a une opposition générale entre l'esprit et la discipline gréco-latine de l'homme, notamment en ce qui touche à la conception des droits de l'individu, un peuple réfractaire à l'ordre romain, comme furent les Celtes inassimilés, était romantique par destination...[77]

Thus the rise of important Breton writers during the nineteenth century would only strengthen the hypothesis which he seeks further to illustrate by the case of Abelard, the noteworthy rebel of his time whose self-contradictory temperament rendered him so odious to his opponents. In the chapter, "Deux hommes. Deux races." Lasserre restates the thesis regarding the social phenomenon.[78] What could be more likely to substantiate Lasserre's explaining in terms of race many of the peculiarities of his old favorite, Renan, especially since Abelard like Renan had departed from orthodoxy in an attempt to give its full due to human reason?

Abelard wishes to remain within the Church and has no intention of destroying the faith. He is a free-thinker only in the sense that he wants full freedom of thought on all subjects. He is critical of his faith because he wishes to repeat in theology his exciting philosophical successes. However, his critical disposition makes him a danger to the Church; Saint Bernard, willing to sacrifice even intellectual progress, if need be, to the safety of the dogma, rises to oppose him. No

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[77] Idem, p.88.

[78] ...je l'explique ainsi: ces trois siècles ont vu s'établir et régner avec éclat, dans les domaines de la politique, de la religion et de la culture, des disciplines contre lesquelles le Breton ne s'insurge pas, mais à quoi, tout en s'y soumettant comme le reste de la France, sauf les protestants, il garde quelquechose de viscéralement réfractaire, et dont il sent l'oppression: discipline de la monarchie absolue, qui prend figure dès le règne de François Ier: discipline du Catholicisme romain, qui, pour s'affirmer avec la dernière énergie contre la Réforme, resserre au Concile de Trente le corps de ses dogmes et constitutions; discipline de l'humanisme gréco-latin. Quand les souffles de la Révolution, de la libre pensée et du romantisme sont devenus assez forts pour faire fissure dans ces disciplines, le Breton a mieux respiré, il s'est exprimé... (Un Conflit religieux...p.86.)

match for the Breton in dialectics, he uses his political acumen to rid the Church of an enemy. Abelard is condemned.

On one side is the stern Burgundian monk, a Latin, inspired by love of the faith he defends, a unified nature like Bossuet; on the other the Breton clerk, a gifted intelligence, the leading thinker of his day, confident of his own worth, but a disunified nature whose insatiable curiosity has carried him through every available intellectual problem. He is ambitious, proud, naively exhibitionistic, lacking in tact, heedless of his competitors, not wise enough to confine himself to a field where his brilliance will not be a menace. And with all this, his amatory successes lead him to extreme humiliation. He has in him the essence of contradiction --like Chateaubriand, Lamennais and Renan.

> Essayez de saisir l'unité de ces superbes esprits, de faire la synthèse de leur pensée, pourtant si active, et qui a fécondé tant de temps; je ne crois pas que vous y puissiez parvenir. Ils vous échappent. Chacune de ces riches personnalités est à la fois mille personnages....[79]

That he has given himself over to the study of Abelard indicates only that Lasserre is extending the scope of his Renan. The shifting, sinuous Breton mind is the real subject of the Conflit religieux. He does not underestimate the value of minds like that of Saint-Bernard.

> ...Il faut à l'humanité des héros d'ordre et d'autorité, comme Saint-Bernard, pour que les choses humaines ne tombent pas en décomposition et en pourriture. Il lui faut des héros de critique et d'indépendance, comme Abélard, pour l'empêcher d'étouffer.[80]

Both types of mind are necessary, but it is the latter which Lasserre prefers to explore.

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[79]Idem, p.84.
[80]Idem, p.200.

Accordingly, Lasserre's interest in Renan remains high. Volume III of the Jeunesse, L'Initiation philosophique d'Ernest Renan, appears as a series of magazine articles.[81] And still the original objective of covering Renan's life up to 1845 is not attained, and there is no indication that it would ever have been attained, even in another volume, for the critic's interests are directed less and less toward Renan, and more toward the history of French philosophy. This book is about the fortune of Descartes; how the Cartesian ideas, mixed with those of the Scottish Common-Sense school, were taken over by the Church and how from this there came about the low estate of Church philosophy just before the Thomist revival. Renan is involved, in as much as he had studied philosophy when the science was at its ebb, but the emphasis is on the ideas, not the man. If Lasserre was carrying out his plan, as he presumably was, in time this long excursion afield would have turned back to the author of the Vie de Jésus. The critic delayed, and died before the turning back could be accomplished.

One reason for the delay was his interest in Georges Sorel, who had pursued a line of thought including several topics which concerned Lasserre. Georges Sorel: theoricien de l'impérialisme is, as Lasserre insists, primarily an exposition of Sorel's ideas.

> Il faut lire ce petit livre comme on lirait un article du Dictionnaire de Bayle: non pour y trouver la personnalité de l'auteur, mais pour s'instruire sur le sujet. J'ai eu dessin de renseigner le public sur les doctrines et l'influence de Georges Sorel.[82]

But Sorel had influenced Mussolini and possibly Lenin, had been a socialist and yet had disciples among the royalists--and had, indeed been a source of inspiration to anti-liberals of both right and left. Here was a chance for Lasserre to redefine his own liberalism in new terms.

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[81] La Jeunesse d'Ernest Renan, III, Pp.3-30 appeared in the Mercure de France, March 15, 1928: Pp.31-110, Idem, May 15, 1929; Pp.114-248, Idem, Nov. 1, 1927.

[82] Idem, p.7.

> Réactionnaire et révolutionnaire à la fois, la philosophie de Sorel est, à ces deux titres, anti-libérale. La forte séduction qu'elle a exercée sur quelques esprits, le fait même que cet esprit l'ait conçue révèlent la décadence du libéralisme européen, ou du moins l'existence d'un mortel peril qui le guette...[83]

Lasserre's task is not only to outline Sorel's ideas, but to show how they are opposed to liberalism. With this in mind he explains Sorel's debt to Nietzsche and Marx, as well as Sorel's two notions: the "myth"--the concept which, although it corresponds to nothing real, serves to inspire humanity (i.e.: Democracy)--and the theory of force, the necessary morality of might. Lasserre holds no brief for or against Sorel's conclusions, considering his own function fulfilled when he has clarified Sorel's ideas, exposed them, shown where they conflict with those of a liberal. He admits admiring Sorel's active mind[84] and likes his realism, but he objects to Sorel in as much as the latter is a homme à système.

> ...pour moi, tout ce qui est système est erreur. Erreur qui peut porter la marque d'une certaine puissance d'esprit; erreur qui, consistant en un certain ensemble d'affirmations que leur auteur outre et force afin de se donner facilité de les jointer et souder en un corps unique, peut contenir bien des éléments de vérité qu'il suffit d'en détacher pour les rendre profitables et les mettre au point; mais en somme, erreur...[85]

It is as an exposition of this error that Georges Sorel is significant.

This period of liberalism came to an abrupt end in 1930, For a space of several years Lasserre had not been well, yet, when invited to deliver several lectures at the University of Buenos Ayres in the fall of 1930, he accepted the invitation. He left France aware enough

[83]Idem, p.257. [84]Idem, p.93. [85]Idem, p.139.

of the precarious condition of his health to provide for the publication of his most recent manuscripts in case he should not live to see them through the presses. He died on November 7, one day less than a month after his return to Paris, of a pulmonary congestion which made short work of his exhausted body.

He had had time, at least, to define what he meant by liberalism. To a certain extent, he had shown that a unity ran through all his work. He had rectified his views on Romanticism, not, to be sure, by any retraction of his famous thesis, but by a general moderation in his judgment of the Romantic tendency. He had cleared himself of politics and had made an effort to relax his severity toward Germany, done justice to Renan, made honorable amends to Bergson, Benda, and others among the living, corrected himself regarding Hugo and Michelet among the dead.

Yet he had failed to complete the impression that he was, and had always been, a liberal. His old tastes, his old ideas about the good and bad in literature--especially poetry--remained, tastes and ideas which, perhaps, said "No" to too many things. It is still too apparent that the "moment" during which he slipped from liberalism was fifteen years long.

The impression which remains, and subordinates all the others, is that his liberalism was principally a declaration of independence from Charles Maurras. Indeed, if it were said that Lasserre's career could be summed up by saying that Lasserre first fell in with Maurras, then fell out with him, and spent the rest of his life rationalizing the experience, the statement, for all its simplisme and unfairness, would contain a large and important kernel of truth.

CONCLUSION

Viewed as a whole, the evolution of Lasserre's doctrines is epitomized in the varying spirits in which he wrote three of his books. In his youth the Crise chrétienne had weighed the positive and negative qualities of many questions without offering more than very tentative conclusions. In his middle age, the Romantisme

français betrayed his great haste to classify, judge, and conclude, to fix everything in order according to a set scale of values. And finally, in his ripest years, his Renan, which he worked at too slowly to finish and which never concludes, is written much in the same spirit as the Crise chrétienne of his youth. One cannot read these books without feeling--and almost participating in--the changes which were working in Lasserre's mind.

Yet nothing authorizes the conclusion that the changes were at all abrupt. As Lasserre himself says, there was no incident on the Damascus Road.[1] We must look, not for something spectacular, but for the signs of slow but continuous growth.

At the end of his life, Lasserre had returned to the political condition of his youth--independence of party. Between the two periods of liberation lies the whole long course of his association with Charles Maurras. Frightened by the dangers which beset France at the end of the century, Lasserre cast his lot with the man who seemed to him to have the interests of the country most completely at heart. One after another, he adopted all of Maurras' doctrines. Perhaps he adopted them even more thoroughly than he ever intended. In any case, between 1897 and 1907, he became a typical ligueur of the Action Française. From 1907 to 1914 he was a leader in the party and a prominent henchman of Maurras. Then, with the World War, he dropped away from Maurras again, but very slowly, for we have seen that he was still writing music criticism for the Action Française as late as 1921. Only in 1925 did Lasserre arrive at a point where he could declare his complete independence of the Master. At the time of his death, even, he was still unsatisfied that the differences between them had been well defined. Returning from South America he surrounded himself with books to write a final article on Maurras. "Je vais l'exécuter," he told his wife.[2] Death prevented the final execution.

Throughout Lasserre's evolution, the historical events which were also taking place make his changes in belief more significant. On his return from Germany he

[1] Faust en France, p.v.
[2] Mme. Lasserre thus quoted him to the author.

had found the nation upset by the Dreyfus Case, the Republic so weak that it seemed unable either to protect the frontiers against invasion or to maintain the social status quo. Lasserre's reaction to this state of affairs, it should be noted, carried him into not only the most patriotic of political parties but into that most completely pledged to preserve and even solidify the existing social order. His leaving this party came at the moment when the Republic had proved itself capable of protecting the nation and of holding society firm on its traditional bases. His declaration of liberalism was made only when the Republic had demonstrated that it could also preserve the social order in the trying circumstances of the peace. Profoundly bourgeois by nature, Lasserre was influenced, more probably than he ever realized by the interests of his class.

Romanticism meant to him social upheaval. As long as the danger of revolution was present he firmly detested Romanticism and the democratic theories which, to his mind, went with it. When the danger had passed he became less adamantine, although his fundamental ideas on Romanticism did not change, nor did the analysis of it, which he refused to repudiate thirty years later. With time he had become mellower, and since there was no danger of a social over-turn he relaxed his severity, moderated the expression of his judgments, claimed to be less systematic in his condemnations. It would have been interesting to see, in the event of a crisis toward 1930, whether Lasserre's reaction toward Romanticism would not, once more, have become really as unfavorable as it had been in 1907.

Lasserre's attitudes toward Germany call for the same remark. There is no denying that the two years he spent there were of lasting influence upon him; in no period of his career does he stop revising his omnipresent theories about German thinkers. Goethe, Nietzsche and Hegel left on him a profound impression. Yet his liking for Germany was never whole-hearted; his dislike became bitter whenever the German menace became at all imminent, and the moderation toward Germany which he showed during his last years by no means hid the old current of suspicion running just beneath it.

Similarly, Lasserre had begun by liking Renan, but began to disapprove of him at the same time that anticlerical liberalism began to be preponderant in French life. From the beginning of his association with Maurras up to the time of the War, Lasserre maintained strong reservations regarding the author of the Vie de Jésus; this return to Renan started when it was visible that "le Renanisme" was not sapping the vitality of the nation.

Meanwhile, throughout the oscillation of the ideas on these subject's the taste of the man remained fundamentally the same. We have seen that he liked the same poetry throughout all the periods of his career, that he always disliked the literature of the chapelle, that his taste was latinate and classical. The part that is good in Claudel, Jammes, Proust and others he may have appreciated, but never with the enthusiasm which he reserved for Mistral, and writers of Mistral's type. There is no such variation in Lasserre's taste as there is in his ideas. One could say even that the ideas furnish the diversity in his work and his taste furnishes the unity. His enemies could argue that this proved that his return to liberalism did not make him a better critic.

This is perhaps true, Lasserre's posterity has not delayed in disagreeing with his judgments. Yet because he was caught in one of the main streams of twentieth-century French thought, and because he played a major rôle in the development of conservative criticism--a rôle second only to that of Maurras--what he said and thought as a liberal (as well as what he said and thought as an anti-liberal) is important both for itself and for its value as a summary of the experiences of a large part of Lasserre's generation.

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